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# THE CHASE

OF THE

REBEL STEAMER OF WAR ORETO,

COMMANDER J. N. MAFFITT, C. S. N.

INTO THE

BAY OF MOBILE,

BY THE

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA,

COMMANDER GEO. HENRY PREBLE, U. S. N.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1862.



CAMBRIDGE:

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION.

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" Good name in man or woman, dear, my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their soul :  
Who steals my purse, steals trash ; 'tis something, nothing ;  
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands ;  
But he that filches from me my good name,  
Robs me of that which not enriches him,  
And makes me poor indeed."

OTHELLO, — *Act III.*

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Allen and Farnham, Printers.

# CHASE OF THE REBEL WAR STEAMER ORETO

BY THE

BLOCKADING FORCE OFF MOBILE, SEPTEMBER 4, 1862.

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COMMANDER PREBLE'S FIRST REPORT OF THE CHASE OF THE  
ORETO, SEPTEMBER 4, 1862.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, Sept. 4, 1862. }

SIR,—I regret having to inform you that a three master screw steamer, bearing an English red ensign and pennant, and carrying four quarter boats and a battery of six or eight broadside guns and one or two pivots, and having every appearance of an English man-of-war, ran the blockade this afternoon under the following circumstances:

I had sent the Winona to the westward to speak a schooner standing in under sail, when the smoke of a steamer was discovered bearing about southeast, and standing directly for us. Observing that she was "*burning black smoke*," I immediately got the Oneida under way and stood toward her, signalling to the Winona to "*chase at discretion*." We soon neared the stranger in company with the Winona, who, as we approached him, gradually hauled to the northward and westward.

When abeam of him, about one hundred yards distant, I hailed him, but receiving no answer I fired a shot across his bow. He ranged ahead without stopping, but still thinking him an English man-of-war I fired two more shots across his bow, and then directed a shot *at* him, which unfortunately went over, between his fore and mainmasts. He soon hauled down his flag, and trained his guns to bear on us, but having no flag to fight under did not fire.

We continued firing *at* him, assisted by the Winona and one of the mortar schooners, but he made sail, and by his superior speed and unparalleled audacity managed to escape us. We sent our shot and shell all around and over him, and are certain that several of our shot and the Winona's struck him.

The Cayuga was to the westward of the port, and not in *signal* distance.\*

The Cuba is loaded and ready to run the blockade, and I beg leave to suggest the *necessity* of more vessels on this station, as the few here now frequently have to be scattered and sent in chase of the *numerous* vessels that appear in sight.\*

With great mortification,

I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander*.

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, Flag-ship Hartford, Pensacola.

FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD, }  
Pensacola Bay, September 8, 1862. }

SIR,—I regret to be compelled again to make another mortifying acknowledgment of apparent neglect, to wit, the running of the blockade at Mobile by a 10 gun gunboat, supposed to be “Laird’s” gunboat, Captain Bullock.† You will perceive, however, from Captain Preble’s report, herewith inclosed, that there was no want of vigilance. They saw her in good time, but failed to sink or capture her. Why Captain Preble did not fire into her after she failed to stop or answer his hail, I cannot imagine. The commander of the Rachel Seaman says, and I believe they all admit, there never was a finer opportunity for stopping a vessel, ‡ until she passed them; then, however, when it was too late, they commenced firing—the Oneida first, the Winona next, and the Rachel Seaman last.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. FARRAGUT, *Rear Admiral*,  
Commanding West Gulf Blockading Squadron.

HON. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

NAVY DEPARTMENT, }  
September 20, 1862. }

Commander George Henry Preble, senior officer in command of the blockading force off Mobile, having been guilty of neglect of duty in permitting the armed steamer *Oreto* to run the blockade, thereby not only disregarding Article 3d, Section 10th, of the Articles of War (which requires an officer to do his utmost to overtake and capture or destroy every vessel which it is his duty to encounter), but omitting the plainest ordinary duty

\* These paragraphs are omitted in the copies sent out from the Navy Department to be entered on the Ship’s Log Books.

† Admiral Farragut, in his letter Oct. 14, says this “*apparent neglect*” is meant not to refer to me but to *himself*.

‡ Admiral Farragut, in his letter of Oct. 14, qualifies this by the important addition of “*had you known her true character.*”

committed to an officer, is, by order of the President, dismissed from the naval service from this date. The commander of each vessel of war, on the day after the receipt of this published general order, will cause it to be read on the quarter-deck at general muster, together with the accompanying reports, and enter both upon the vessel's log.

GIDEON WELLES, *Secretary of the Navy.*

FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD, }  
Pensacola Bay, September 5, 1862. }

SIR, — I am very much pained to hear of the passage into Mobile Bay of Gunboat No. 290.

You should have fired but *one* blank cartridge or shot to heave the vessel to; *the others* should have been fired *into her*.

Very respectfully,

(Signed)

D. G. FARRAGUT, *Rear Admiral,*  
Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

P. S. I will send the gunboats back to their stations as fast as they can be gotten ready.

Respectfully, D. G. F., R. A.

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, Senior Naval Officer, off Mobile.

COMMANDER PREBLE'S SECOND REPORT TO ADMIRAL FARRAGUT,  
IN REPLY TO HIS LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 5th.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, September 6, 1862. }

SIR, — As in your letter of the 5th inst. you seem to censure my having fired more than one shot across the bow of Gunboat No. 290, the supposed English man-of-war which ran our blockade on the 4th inst., justice to myself urges me to explain that from the time of the first shot being fired across her bows to the fourth shot, which was fired at, but which unfortunately went over her, was, according to my clerk, who took minutes of the time, only *three* minutes, and a third shot was fired at her fore foot. She hauled down her colors five minutes after the first shot. As she did not stop her engines, I took no heed of it, but continued my fire on her. Most of our shot struck ~~the~~ water just inside of her, and *ricocheted* over between her masts and pipes. Two of our shells seemed to burst over her in passing. The confident boldness with which she stood toward us, and within hail, helped her deception. My impression is, thinking us one of the gunboats, the intention was to engage us, but on discovering our force the men were sent below out of harm's way. They at first trained their battery on us, so our masthead look-out reported, and afterward only *three* men remained on deck, and they failed to get the sheets home of the sails loosed.

Had I been, officially or unofficially, *in any way*, informed that a man-of-war steamer was expected or on the ocean, I would have known her true character and could have run her down.

One of our boilers had been under repairs all the morning, and when we got under way we had full steam only in *one* boiler, and were raising it on the other, and could not immediately get up full speed. A mile or so of distance and a few minutes more of daylight, and she must have been ours.

I ran the Oneida into three fathoms, when, as no landmarks could be seen, I was obliged to haul off. The rebel went over the shoal water near the S. E. breaker head, where we could not follow, and was in the main ship channel, and covered by the guns of the forts within half an hour after our first shot at him.

Her forward pivot gun was trained to bear upon us, and the boatswain who saw it from aloft says it is a heavy gun, he should say a 10-inch, probably a heavy rifle. Her broadside guns looked to me like English 32-pounders of 42 cwt.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
(Signed) GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander*.

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, Flag-ship Hartford, Pensacola.

NAVY DEPARTMENT, September 20, 1862.

SIR, — Rear Admiral Farragut has transmitted to the Department your letter addressed to him on the 4th inst. in which you report that on the afternoon of that day, a vessel "carrying four quarter-boats and a battery of eight broadside guns, one or two pivots, and having every appearance of an English man-of-war, ran the blockade," and of her approach you had abundant notice, and when abeam of her — about 100 yards distant — you hailed her, fired repeatedly across her bow, over and at her, but she managed by "superior speed and unparalleled audacity" to enter the harbor of Mobile.

Upon submitting your letter to the President, I received from him prompt directions to announce to you your dismissal from the service.

You will from this date cease to be regarded as an officer of the Navy of the United States.

I am respectfully, your obedient servant,  
GIDEON WELLES, *Secretary of the Navy*.

Mr. GEORGE H. PREBLE, late Commander U. S. Navy, Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 12, 1862. }

SIR, — I have received my dismissal from the Navy officially under your signature. I have no comments to make, and have given over the com-

mand of this vessel, until the arrival of her appointed Commander, to Lieutenant Commander Sicard, an officer every way worthy of the confidence of the Department.

The Admiral forwards me my dismissal, but without letter or remark, and I have no letter from him on the subject of the *Oreto* except one, of four or five lines, in which he thinks I should have fired my second shot into her, instead of ahead of her, not knowing at the time, that only three minutes elapsed between the first shot ahead and the fourth shot aimed at, and *ordered into her*.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

HON. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.

#### APPEAL TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 10, 1862. }

TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

SIR, — I do not believe you would do intentional injustice to any one; yet you have done me the most cruel injustice and dismissed me from a service in which I have passed twenty-seven years of my life, without trial, without a hearing, and on insufficient and incomplete evidence.

You have assailed my honor, which is dearer to me than life, and you have caused to be proclaimed that I failed to do my utmost to take and capture a vessel of the enemy, and omitted to perform the most ordinary duty of an officer. This sentence and this opinion you have directed to be read to the assembled crews of every vessel in commission in the navy, and entered upon the ships' logs.

I can prove by every officer and man on board of this ship, or who was present on the occasion referred to, that I did do my utmost to overtake, capture, or destroy the *Oreto*, and that, omitting no duty, I performed my whole entire duty energetically and faithfully, as I have ever done while in the service.

I demand, therefore, a fair and full and instant investigation of all the circumstances before a court of inquiry, and when acquitted, that my innocence shall be proclaimed in the same manner as the sentence has been promulgated, and that the record of my disgrace shall, by official order, be expunged from the log books of the navy.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I ask of you this justice, which I am sure you will grant.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander*.

## APPEAL TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 8, 1862.

SIR, — I have read in a newspaper a “general order,” issued by yourself, by direction of the President, dismissing me from the navy for neglect of duty in permitting the armed steamer Oreto to run the blockade off Mobile, said order stating that I failed to do my utmost to overtake, capture, or destroy said vessel, which it was my duty to encounter, and “omitted the plainest ordinary duty committed to an officer.” Such is not the opinion of the officers of this squadron, who are knowing to all the circumstances; and I am ready and able to prove I did my duty, and my whole duty, fairly, energetically, and zealously, and demand the privilege of a court of inquiry, anticipating, when the circumstances are known, a revocation of your order as public as it has been made, and a restoration to this command.

I have not waited for the receipt of the official announcement of my dismissal, as the disgrace inflicted on my honored name is more than I can bear.

Though unwilling to boast of my own services, I refer you to the records of the Navy Department for my twenty-seven years of honorable service, including active service in the Florida, Mexican, and present war, as also on the coast of China against pirates. Is it likely, with such a record, and when my commanding officer, the admiral of the squadron, says there was “no want of vigilance,” I would fail to exert myself to the utmost in chase of a flying enemy?

I do not understand what “plain and ordinary duty” I omitted.

I do not think that either yourself or the President would do me an intentional injustice, and believe action has been taken hastily, under erroneous impressions.

I therefore ask for a full and fair investigation before a court of inquiry or court martial, and that the decision or sentence may be made as freely public as your orders.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander.*

Hon. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 8, 1862.

SIR, — Unseen and unheard while engaged on distant service, I learn from the columns of a newspaper, that my name has been stricken from the rolls of the navy — after twenty-seven years honorable servitude, for alleged negligence in allowing the Oreto to escape into Mobile Bay on the afternoon of the 4th of September. This *injustice* to me, as I feel assured *you*

will consider it, has been done *mainly* and I think *unintentionally* on your part, from the impression produced by your letter of the 8th ult. to the Navy Department, forwarding my first hasty and incomplete report of that occurrence. I judge so, because that letter and my report are to be spread upon the log books, and read to the assembled crews, to account for the general order that follows. My report was written hurriedly, and sent off a few minutes after the affair by the *Winona*, which vessel I despatched at once to Pensacola with the intelligence, leaving it to her commander to inform you of all the particulars — of which he was fully cognizant. He afterwards informed me he rendered a full account. I also sent by him the gunner's statement of shot and shell expended by this vessel, not having had time to incorporate it in my report. The two concluding paragraphs in my report, I notice are omitted in the printed letter. Though perhaps of but little import as bearing upon the question at issue, — if I am to be judged by my report, I should like to have the whole of it, and not an imperfect copy spread upon the log books of the Navy.

You say in your letter to the Secretary of the Navy, "You have again to make a mortifying acknowledgment of apparent neglect." I know nothing of the former occasions referred to, but may I ask, was my neglect so *apparent*, when as you say lower down, "There was no want of vigilance." I cannot believe that yourself or any one can suppose or imagine that *any* officer, would not do his utmost under the circumstances that followed, to pursue and capture his flying enemy — a rich and honorable prize. You next say, "Why Captain Preble did not fire into her after she failed to stop or answer his hail, I cannot imagine." My report shows that I did fire at her, and into her immediately afterwards, the gunner's report will show how often, and we have since learned from rebel sources with some effect. Altogether fifty shots and shells were fired at her in the half hour's chase by the three vessels of which thirty-five were from this vessel. I gave credit to the commanding officer of the *Rachel Seaman* (whose appearance was quite unexpected), for his good conduct in firing at the steamer three or four shots, and for his judgment in tacking off shore, when he was likely to interfere with our chase. I also requested the commander of the *Winona* to verbally report his not hoisting his colors, when chased and boarded by that vessel shortly before, and for not having them hoisted while he was firing at the enemy. Though his conduct was most praiseworthy, I cannot think you are justified in giving *his* opinion to the Department, "That there never was a finer opportunity for stopping a vessel, &c.," without first asking from me a full report of all the attendant circumstances, which he, three or four miles off at the close of the chase, could not have known.

Your next remark is that the "firing was too late." As it was commenced as soon as the vessel was hailed, and continued whenever and as often as a gun could be brought to bear, until the vessel escaped us into shoal water where we were obliged to haul off, I cannot understand in what sense it was too late. In a subsequent report I explained to you that the time occupied in firing the three shots across her bows, one of which was

aimed at his fore foot, was less than three minutes. The next shell was fired from the eleven inch after pivot gun, and aimed at her hull, but unfortunately went over her. As to the shooting, if it was bad, I had been but a few days in command, and the blame cannot rest with me. But I may remark, our shot fell very close, though seemingly doing but little damage.

Excuse the freedom with which I have analyzed your letter to the Department, feeling sure *it has borne quite a different construction from what you intended*, and that you will be ready to *repair*, so far as you can, the *lasting injury* it has caused me. Had you considered me deserving of this unjust sentence, I am sure you would not have retained me for an hour in the command of this vessel, and on the same blockade.

For my position in the Navy I care but little, but my reputation as an officer, is very dear to me, and has hitherto been unsullied in a long course of service. The distress this newspaper announcement will occasion my family and friends is very trying to me. Up to the time of joining your command in March last, I had not the pleasure of your personal acquaintance. Since then you have had frequent occasions to judge my professional ability, activity, and intelligence. I ask you therefore, as a matter of justice, to give me in writing your free and candid judgment of my conduct in this affair.

The poorest boy or man in the service has, for his petty offences, the privilege of a summary court martial and a hearing. Through you I respectfully request from the Department a Court of Inquiry into my conduct on this occasion, and would willingly have it extended through my whole term of service in the navy, confident of a clean record. *I court a full and complete investigation.* I hope yet to see an order *revoking* the order for my dismissal, read to the crews in as public a manner, and spread upon the log books on the same page as the former.

I feel sure the President does not design to do injustice to any one.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander.*

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, U. S. N., Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, Flag-ship Hartford, Pensacola.

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FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD, }  
Pensacola Bay, Oct. 14, 1862. }

SIR,—I have received your communication of the 8th inst., informing me of your dismissal.

Permit me to assure you that no one has been pained more at your dismissal than myself, although I felt it my duty to report the facts of the case as submitted to me. I always lay before the Hon. Secretary the authority from which my facts are derived, and therefore in your case, enclosed your report upon which the Department acted, with my own, as I could know nothing more than it did.

I told you frankly, all the fault I had to find with you was "not firing sooner," and to that, and the bad firing, I attributed the escape of the *Oreto*, all of which you frankly admitted.\* I gave you full credit for *vigilance* and *promptitude*, but only said I did not know why you did not fire sooner; that was natural for me to say from my anxiety for the capture, but I felt satisfied *afterwards*, that it arose from your desire to avoid an insult to England, and a *confidence that you could secure your chase, if you were deceived by him*; the conclusion, however, showed that your gunnery proved too bad to do it. I am also aware that you were not exactly responsible for the training of your crew, as you had but too recently taken command of the ship—still the *Oreto* got in and it was my duty to report the facts, and you will find that the Department acted upon your own statement, and not on mine.

I will now notice one or two remarks in your letter. The "apparent neglect" to which you allude, in my letter, had no reference to you, it was a quotation from a letter of the Department to me, referring to the ram "*Arkansas*" catching us without steam. I think my letter tended to convey the idea that although "apparently neglect" it was not such in reality.

*As to your efforts to capture or destroy her I neither doubted them, nor said that I did*; on the contrary, I said that "you all fired at her, and all claimed to have hit her, but failed to capture or destroy her." As to the remark of the captain of the *Rachel Seaman* he did not intend to reflect on you in the slightest degree, more than on himself. He stated, and so did you, that there never was a finer opportunity for taking a vessel, *had you known her true character*, and he too ascribed the failure to bad firing mainly, for he said he struck her but once.

In reference to your explanation to me, they were as promptly sent to the Department, as transmitted to me.

You judge me rightly when you suppose I never intended to do you such a lasting injury, and I trust and sincerely hope you will be as able to satisfy the President, as myself, that you were *at most* only culpable in *hesitating* between the risk of insulting a British vessel of war, and *running the risk of allowing an enemy to escape*. Our orders are very stringent in both cases.†

I have thus endeavored to disabuse your mind as to the *effect* of *my report*, or of any *intentional* reflection on your conduct, beyond which it is not my province to go, but I will certainly always bear testimony to your officer-like and gentlemanly deportment, the general efficiency and good order of your vessel, and will further state that wherever you erred, I attributed it purely to an error of judgment. Such, however, is military life,—success is the standard by which we are judged, and rest assured, that I fully sympathize with you and your family in this great mortification,

\* See G. H. Preble's letter of Oct. 28, 1862.

† I had no orders on the subject, but was left the senior officer of the blockade, without any written or verbal instructions whatever.

as well for their own sake, as for the reverence I have always had for the character of your *Grandsire*, and my respect for yourself.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. FARRAGUT, *Rear Admiral*,  
Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, Commanding U. S. Steam Sloop Oneida.

FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD, }  
Pensacola Bay, October 18, 1862. }

SIR,—I regret that my statement of Commander Preble's case should have drawn upon him such summary and severe punishment. That he deserved some censure for his hesitation to act or fire is to me clear, but when it is considered how desirous the Government has been to avoid giving offence to foreign nations in enforcing the blockade, I feel assured that Commander Preble's hesitation arose purely from that cause. The *Oreto* was flying the English flag and pennant, and he feared \* she might be a British man-of-war, and having more confidence in the gunnery of his crew than the result proved that they deserved, he lost *three minutes*, that were never to be regained, as every moment increased the space between the vessels and made it more difficult for Captain Preble to bring his guns to bear without losing by yawing his vessel.

As the effect of all punishment is principally intended to *prevent the repetition of offences*, rather than to punish the individual, I think there can be but little doubt that this effect has in the present instance been obtained upon the entire Navy, and I therefore hope that the Department will grant Commander Preble a hearing before a court-martial or court of inquiry, so as to enable him to show his country and his family that he has not sullied the brilliant escutcheon of his grandsire by any want of fidelity to his country. I sincerely trust that the President as well as yourself may be prevailed upon to grant this favor to one who has served his country faithfully, with unblemished character up to the moment of this unfortunate occurrence.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. FARRAGUT, *Rear Admiral*,  
Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

Hon. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

UNITED STATES STEAMER RHODE ISLAND, }  
Pensacola, October 28, 1862. }

SIR,—Will you do me the favor to state whether, in your opinion, I did

\* I did not *fear*. I fully believed her to be an English vessel of war until *after* I fired into her.—G. H. P.

my utmost to overtake, capture, or destroy the Oreto on the afternoon of the 4th of September; also what plainest and most ordinary duty of an officer I omitted on that occasion, for such are the charges of the Secretary of the Navy, founded on your letter of September 8th and my accompanying report.

Will you also please state, whether my previous attention to my duties while in your squadron, has merited and received your approbation.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, U. S. N., Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, Pensacola.

UNITED STATES STEAMER RHODE ISLAND, }  
Pensacola, October 28, 1862. }

SIR, — I have to acknowledge your letter of the 14th inst., and to return you my thanks for its kindly expressions of sympathy, &c. It is my duty, however, to correct one misapprehension of yours, namely, that I frankly admitted I fired too late. You certainly misunderstood me, for I did not think so at the time, I have not thought so since, and I do not think so now. With the same want of knowledge I had when the Oreto hove in sight, I should do again precisely as I did then. The three shots fired ahead did not affect the result of the chase or delay it. The escape of the Oreto, in my opinion, was due to our want of steam power, which I did not know of at the time, and to our being so near her, that when she gained on us, we had immediately to train our guns sharp forward, and yaw the ship off, to bring them to bear. If I had known her true character, or that the Confederates had a vessel of war afloat, as was known at Pensacola, I would have run her aboard, or run her down, as she approached, *without firing*.

For the bad shooting I do not hold myself responsible, as I had no opportunity for practising the crew, since assuming command of the Oneida, but, in justice to the officers and crew, you will recollect I told you that our firing was very close, and that my surprise was, we did not sink her at our first fire. I thought it "*bad*," only because it did not meet *my expectations*, anxiously alive to the result.

I did not claim to have hit her, because she escaped *seemingly* uninjured. We now know such was not the case, and that one of our 11 inch shells entered her coal bunkers. The Winona could not have fired it, for she was astern of the chase. It was the second or third shot from our after pivot, and was reported to me at the time, and seen to strike her by the crew of the forward pivot gun, but as I could not see it when it struck, I said nothing about it. If that shell had not been smothered in the coal, it would have changed the result of the chase. Other shell, as I told you, struck near the water-line, and ricocheted over her. One I saw burst near her fore-rigging, and I think its fragments occasioned the casualties reported. Another burst in passing her starboard hammock rail.

The only error of judgment, or perhaps I should say *want of thought*, that I can confess to in the matter is, my neglecting to shoot the man at the wheel with a musket when I had opportunity so to do. I was so much taken up with the chase and battery, I did not think of it until too late.

I have now I believe completed all I have to say about the chase of the Oreto, until I hear what action has been taken by the President and Navy Department. I will, however, add, that the reverence you express for my *grandsire*, I beg you will transfer to my *uncle*, for such was Commodore Preble, to whom you no doubt allude. He has a *grandson*, a midshipman and acting master on board the Kearsarge at present.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, U. S. N., Commanding Western Gulf Squadron, Pensacola.

FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD, }  
Pensacola Bay, October 28, 1862. }

SIR,—I have received your communication of this date, and in reply have to state that I thought I had answered all those questions in my letter to you of the 14th. I therein stated that the neglect was an *apparent one*, but that you had shown every vigilance by seeing the vessel in time, and was alongside of her in time, and the only fault I found with you, was not firing at her *sooner*, which was caused no doubt by your supposing her to be an English man-of-war, and I supposed the hesitation of the *three* minutes, with the bad firing, was the cause of the loss of the prize.

I have stated all these facts to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, and asked him to allow you a court of inquiry, or court-martial, to give you an opportunity of clearing yourself from any other charge than that of *a moment's* hesitation to fire on a vessel which you *supposed for the ins. it was, or might be, of a friendly nation*. I imputed nothing more to you in my letter to the Department, and I have also informed it that you were not responsible for the bad firing, as you had but recently taken command of the vessel, but if there was any swell on, I can readily understand that no one could insure good firing from one of our gunboats, their motion being so quick, still I see by the enemy's report of the affair that they say "they were struck several times, had four men killed and several wounded."

In conclusion, I have to repeat my remark, that I have always found you attentive and vigilant in the discharge of your duties since under my command, and that I deeply regret that the Department have dealt with you so severely, and still hope they will give you a hearing before a proper tribunal.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

D. G. FARRAGUT, *Rear Admiral*,  
Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron.

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, United States Steamer Rhode Island, Pensacola Bay.

COMMANDER PREBLE'S THIRD REPORT OF THE CHASE OF THE  
REBEL WAR STEAMER ORETO, ALIAS FLORIDA, BY THE UNITED  
STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, SEPTEMBER 4, 1862.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, Oct. 10, 1862.

SIR,—Having never made a full and complete written, though several verbal, reports of the chase of the rebel war steamer Oreto, alias Florida, by the Oneida, on the 4th of September last, and circumstances having occurred that require I should do so, I submit the following: On the 4th of September the blockading force off Mobile consisted of the Oneida, Cayuga, and Winona, myself the senior officer, a position I had occupied since the 30th of August, when the steam frigate Susquehanna left for Pensacola for repairs. The steam gunboats Pinola, Kanawha, and Kennebec, all attached to this blockade, were also temporarily withdrawn, and at Pensacola for repairs or coal. The small and reduced force left at my command was thus distributed: the Winona, to the northward and eastward of the bar, to guard the Swash Channel; the Cayuga, to the northward and westward, to guard the Western Channel, and the Oneida off to the southward of the bar to guard the main ship Channel. The evening previous, I gave instructions to the Cayuga to go to the westward in the morning, take a look at Petit Bois and Horn Island passes, which were necessarily unguarded, get some fresh beef from Petit Bois, and return as soon as these objects were accomplished. Consequently the Cayuga was not in sight when the Oreto run in.

The evening previous also, the chief engineer represented to me the very bad and leaky condition of the boilers, stating that an almost constant use of the donkey pump was necessary in consequence when the engines were not in motion; with some hesitation, though it had been the custom to do so with my predecessors on the blockade, I gave him permission to haul the fire under one boiler the next morning at daylight, provided he would hurry up and complete his repairs before night, and ordered a full pressure of steam to be kept on the remaining boiler. About noon, or soon after, I sent for him to ascertain how the work was progressing, and receiving a satisfactory reply, congratulated myself the work was nearly accomplished. At 3.45, fires were started under the repaired boiler. When we got under way at 5.30, P. M., in chase, I fully believed we had steam under both boilers. We were not, however, able to obtain a *working* pressure of steam on the repaired boiler until our return from the chase of the Oreto to our anchorage off the bar at 7.30, P. M. Consequently our usual good weather speed of ten to ten and a half knots was very much diminished, and instead of sixty to seventy revolutions of the screw, we were only able to make about 38 to 40, and an estimated speed of seven knots. During the chase the steam was run down from 24 pounds to 15.

At daylight, or soon after, on the 4th, a square-rigged sailing vessel was observed to the southward, and the Winona, under general instructions, went

out in chase. At 2, P. M., another sail was reported, which the Winona boarded. At 3.35, another sail was discovered to the southward and westward. The Winona then standing toward us and apparently not observing her, I fired our howitzer to attract her attention, and then made signal to her "To speak the strange sail and bring the Commander-in-chief intelligence, if any; if none, return to your station." She accordingly stood off to the southward and westward in the direction of the strange sail, which proved to be a schooner (the Rachel Seaman), and was returning toward the Oneida to communicate, when at 5.05, a sail was reported from aloft bearing south-east half east, soon made out to be a steamer and reported from aloft as the Susquehanna, but generally supposed to be the Connecticut, known to be at Pensacola and momentarily expected. The strange steamer, when discovered, was standing for us with her three masts in line or range, we could see she had square yards forward, though hull down. At 5.15, we saw she was burning bituminous coal, and a slight yaw in her course showed me she was barkentine rigged. Impressed with the idea she was an English gunboat inspecting our blockade, I made signal to the Winona to "chase at discretion," and got the Oneida immediately under way and stood toward her, thinking it would look more vigilant to the English man-of-war to be under way and at quarters when we met him. We accordingly furled awnings and were at general quarters before we were in rifle range of the stranger, and over fifteen minutes before we fired our first shot at him.

The Oneida was steered for the port bow of the stranger, who, as we approached him, continued to steer directly for us and hoisted an English red ensign. He had already up a short coach whip or night pennant. We could now see she carried quarter and waist boats — had a broadside of guns with tompions out — hammock nettings, and air ports fore and aft, and in fact wore every appearance of being an English despatch gunboat. I believe every person on board the Oneida was impressed with this belief, being ignorant that the rebels had a vessel of war on the ocean, from the delay of the Connecticut's mail at Pensacola, which, when received from her on the 6th, gave us the first intimation we had of the Oreto's being at Cardenas, and of No. 290's having left England.\*

When near the supposed man-of-war we put our helm to starboard so as not to pass him, and came round to the northward and westward so as to lay about abeam of him, or perhaps a little across or on his port bow. He was steaming very rapidly, and when within about one hundred yards — perhaps nearer — the two vessels nearly abeam of each other, I hailed him, but receiving no answer, directed a shot from the rifled forecandle pivot to be thrown across his bow, then another, and then a third "*close to his forefoot,*" all in rapid succession. As these guns produced no impression, I directed to fire *into* him, and almost simultaneously the whole starboard broadside was

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\* Several steamers, the Iroquois, Cayuga, Jackson, Harriet Lane, &c., all from Pensacola, arrived at or passed the blockade off Mobile, after the Connecticut's arrival, without bringing her mail or any despatch from the admiral.

discharged at him, the first shot, however, from the after 11-inch pivot gun went just over his rail between his fore and mainmasts. As it was a shrapnel with fuse cut to a second and a quarter, and fell into the water without exploding, you can judge how near we were to him. My clerk, who timed the firing, states that the first gun fired across his bows was at 6, P. M., and the order given to fire into him at 6.03, P. M. At 6.05 he hauled down his colors and pennant, and hoisted no others during the chase. Seeing no slackening up of his speed, I gave orders to continue our fire. About this time the Winona opened fire on him from her position astern, and soon after the schooner which the Winona had boarded, stood in toward our bow and fired three or four shots at him, which was the first intimation I had of her being a friendly vessel of war, as she showed no colors before, after, or during the continuance of the chase. I thought the spirit with which her commander attempted to assist in the capture of the vessel very praiseworthy, and approved of the judgment with which he tacked off shore, when likely to embarrass our chase by getting under our bows.

Both vessels were gradually sheered in shore, the stranger evidently fast gaining upon us, so that we had to train our pivot guns sharp forward and yaw off to bring them to bear upon him. This and the smoke from our guns which hung between us, prevented our firing as rapidly as we could have wished.

Soon after we opened fire upon him, he attempted to make sail by loosing his foretopsail and foretopgallant-sail, but the explosion of one of our shells over his deck hurried the men from aloft; they never got the sheets fairly home, and the sails were of little or no assistance to him, as the wind was light. We thought he trained his guns to bear upon us, though he did not fire, and the Boatswain reported from aloft that he was training his forward pivot gun, but he has since told me he was mistaken, and the men he saw were at work at the rigging of the sails loosed. At first he had from twenty to thirty men on deck, but after our firing commenced, the Boatswain could see from aloft but three or four—the man at the wheel, one forward, and one or two passing along the deck.

Continuing our firing as rapidly as circumstances would admit, and giving repeated orders to go faster, and to take better aim, not understanding at the time why we could not keep up with the stranger, who was evidently gaining on us, I saw we were standing in toward the ruins of Sand Island Light-house, and that the stranger was crossing the head of the south-east breakers on the eastern side of the channel.

The leadsman soon gave "three fathoms" of water, and night closing around us, I was reluctantly compelled to put our helm aport and abandon the chase at 6.27, P. M., and had the mortification of seeing the stranger cross the shoal without striking, and haul up into the main ship channel—giving her a last shot from the fore-castle rifle pivoted over to port—the only gun that would bear as we hauled off.

The Winona chasing astern and using her gun pivoted on the port side, went in shore of the chase, and hauled off at about the same time,

when (as her commander informed me), in twelve feet of water. We continued the chase as long as it was prudent or profitable to do so.

Finding the rebel had escaped us, I returned to the anchorage off the bar, where I was joined by the *Winona*.

Believing it important you should have early intelligence of what had happened, I signalled the Captain of the *Winona* to come on board, and, writing my hurried and incomplete report of the 4th, directed the Captain of the *Winona* to take his station for the night, and at early daylight proceed to Pensacola with my despatch, accompanying which was the Gunner's report of shot and shell fired, and enjoining upon him to acquaint you with all the particulars, such as I had no time to give. I then hurried him back to his station to the northward and eastward, fearing, as it was very dark, something might slip out. At 11, p. m., the *Cayuga* returned from Horn Island Pass; Captain Thornton and the *Winona* returned to this blockade at 10, p. m., the 5th, bringing me your letter of that date, in which you express the opinion I should have fired but one shot across his bows and the next at him. Had I not been almost convinced he was an English man-of-war, I would undoubtedly have done so, but the deception was perfect, and his "unparalleled audacity," in standing directly and boldly for us, helped the deception. I did not wish to break our neutrality or be wanting in courtesy with a friendly nation.

When we first ranged up in hailing distance, I could undoubtedly have boarded him or run him down, but it was too late for these manœuvres when his true character was discovered.

Thinking you are wrongly impressed as to the time occupied in the firing across his bows and into him, I wrote you my letter of September 6, informing you that it was only three minutes, and at the same time giving you a few facts concerning the chase, but still no complete report, as I supposed Captain Thornton had related to you all the particulars. Subsequently, at Pensacola, I had opportunity of explaining to you in person, when you remarked that you had written the Secretary that you did not see that I was to blame, but the rebel steamer's escape was owing to "bad shooting." Judge my surprise, then, when I find myself suddenly and ignominiously dismissed from the Navy on your letter forwarding my first hasty statement of this affair. I told you that I did not claim to have hit the vessel at all, though our shot covered her and were very close ones, as I could see with my glass no marks upon her hull or spars. We have since learned she was hit several times; that an eleven-inch shell went into her coal bunkers a foot from the water line; that her sides were pretty well peppered with grape, shrapnel, and pieces of shell, and that she had one man killed and two wounded,\* as the rebel account says, out of a crew of thirteen, mostly sick. Allowing her to have had twenty to thirty for a crew, this is a greater comparative per centage of casualties than happened to this squadron in passing the Mississippi forts, and greater also than it was each time the bat-

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\* The Mobile newspapers report four killed and several wounded.

teries of Vicksburg were successfully run. Can it be considered remarkable that after those successful achievements of your squadron, this rebel steamer, in humble imitation, should succeed in passing under the fire of two gunboats without being sunk or materially injured?

That I did my whole duty in this matter I fearlessly claim. That according to the tenth paragraph of third Article of War, I did not neglect to seasonably clear my ship for action, and that I used my utmost exertions to overtake, capture, or destroy the vessel; and that I omitted no ordinary duty of an officer, I can prove by the accompanying statements from all the officers of the *Oneida*.

The President recommended me by name for the thanks of Congress, as one of the commanding officers in the passage of the Forts Jackson and St. Phillip, and subsequent capture of New Orleans, though action was not taken on it by Congress. He next, by the recommendation of the "Advisory Board," promotes me to the rank which had been justly my due for six months previous;\* and now, on insufficient and incomplete evidence, he directs that my name be stricken from the rolls of the Navy, and a record of my disgrace placed upon every log book and read to the assembled crews of every ship in commission. This is hard usage, and small consideration for one who *to-day* completes his twenty-seventh year of service.

I have been most *cruelly* and *unjustly* treated, and I call upon you, Admiral, as my immediate commanding officer, to aid me in obtaining *justice*.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Rear Admiral D. G. FARRAGUT, Commanding Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, Flag-Ship *Hartford*, Pensacola.

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander*.

\* An act of Congress, approved December 21, 1861, retired all officers who had been forty-five years in service, or were sixty-two years of age; and the vacancies were to be filled as "then" provided by law. The 4th Auditor issued a circular to paymasters, saying: "This act takes effect from the date of its passage, and in the pay of all such (retired) officers you will be governed by its provisions." But no promotions were made to fill vacancies until July 16, 1862, after the passage of the grade bill; thus a large number of officers engaged at Hilton Head and in the Mississippi River and elsewhere, were deprived of their promotions and corresponding pay for full seven months.

## STATEMENTS OF THE OFFICERS OF THE ONEIDA.

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UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
On Blockade off Mobile, October 8, 1862. }

GENTLEMEN, — Will you please furnish me with a statement to the best of your recollection, of all the incidents connected with the chase of the rebel steamer Oreto by this vessel on the 4th of September last.

Please add to your statements, answers to the following questions.

*First.* Did I, in your opinion, neglect to prepare for, or clear ship for action seasonably, and did I do my utmost to overtake and capture or destroy the vessel we were in pursuit of, on discovering her to be an enemy?

*Second.* What duty, the plainest or most ordinary committed to an officer, do you remember or consider I omitted on that occasion?

*Third.* Did I exhibit energy, zeal, and anxiety in the pursuit to overtake and capture the chase?

*Fourth.* Can you suggest any precaution that was omitted?

Very respectfully yours,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE, *Commander.*

To the Officers of the U. S. Ship Oneida, off Mobile.

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UNITED STATES SHIP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 8, 1862. }

SIR, — The following is a statement to the best of my recollection, of what occurred during the chase of the Oreto off this port September 4, 1862.

About five o'clock, P.M., I was called to get the ship under way in chase of a steamer standing towards the blockading force from the eastward. As we were getting under way, the stranger was distant about six or seven miles, using bituminous coal. As we stood toward him, we furled awnings and went to quarters.

The Oneida was steered for the port bow of the stranger, who when he got within about half a mile, hoisted the English red ensign and pennant; and when near, putting his helm aport, sheered gradually in shore.

The Oneida's helm was put a starboard, and she followed closely on the stranger's port bow. I think that at this time, the vessels being distant about 150 yards, by your order, a 30 pounder rifle shot was fired across the stranger's bows. When both vessels had sheered in shore some distance, the stranger put his helm a starboard gradually. When the Oneida's helm being also put a starboard, the two vessels about abeam of each other, stood to the westward. About this time (or it may have been a little previous) you hailed the stranger, then distant about 100 yards; but I did not hear any answer. After the first shot, two others were fired across his bows at very short intervals. Very quickly after the third shot across his bows, you gave the order to fire *into* him, and the 11 inch guns at once commenced and sustained their fire — when they could be brought to bear, or when the thick curtain of smoke (which soon accumulated between the two vessels) lifted, so as to allow a view of the chase. The chase hauled down the English flag and hoisted no other; but whether the flag was struck before or after we fired at him, I do not remember; but at all events, it was very near the time of commencement of our 11 inch fire. We had fired but a few shots when the chase loosed, and partly sheeted home his topsail and topgallant-sail (fore). These did not help him materially; but he steamed very fast, and drew so much ahead of us, that soon we were compelled to yaw in order to discharge the 11 inch guns. We steamed after him, but I do not think that at any time we went much over six knots, as we had steam up on but one boiler.

The stranger crossed the end of the shoals, and got into the channel leading into Mobile Bay. We followed him into about three fathoms of water, when, as it was getting dusk, and we were unacquainted with the bar, we were obliged to give up the chase.

*Up to the time of his hauling down his flag, it was my opinion that the stranger was a large "English" gunboat.*

To the questions proposed by you under date of October 8th, I return the following answers:

1st. The ship was prepared for action in season; and when the character of the chase became apparent, you did your utmost to capture or destroy her.

2d. I do not know what duty is referred to (as being the plainest and most ordinary committed to an officer) in your second question.

3d. You did, as far as my observation or recollection goes, display zeal, energy, and anxiety in pursuit of the chase. I was on the bridge mostly, and you were most of the time on the poop, where you had the best view of the chase that could be obtained.

4th. I cannot suggest any precaution that occurred to me at the time as having been omitted.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. SICARD, *Lieutenant Commander and Executive Officer.*

Commander GEORGE H. PREBLE, U. S. S. Oneida.

UNITED STATES SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile Bay, October 8, 1862. }

SIR, — In compliance with your request, I respectfully submit the following statement of what I remember of the chase, which terminated by the entrance into Mobile Bay of the rebel gunboat Oreto on the evening of the 4th of September.

Upon going on deck, when the ship was getting underway at about half past five, P. M., I saw a steamer to the southward and eastward, burning bituminous coal and standing for us. As soon as our anchor was aweigh we bore up for the stranger, the engineer on watch having orders to go ahead fast. The order for greater speed was frequently given, but not obeyed because a sufficient pressure of steam could not be kept up.

On nearing the stranger, *I thought him to be an English gunboat*, from his resemblance in every respect to that class of vessels, as well as from the fact that he carried the English ensign and pennant. When within about three hundred yards, he bore up gradually for the shore, attempting to cross our bows from starboard to port, when three shots from our pivot rifle on the forecastle, were fired across his bows at short intervals, but without effect. About this time you hailed the stranger, and received no reply. We kept our guns to bear on him, by keeping away with our starboard helm, and training sharp on the bow. Our shot being unheeded, you issued the order to fire into him, which was immediately done by both eleven inch pivot guns. He then hauled down the English ensign and trained his guns on us, but I do not think he fired. At about the same time he let fall his foretop-sail and topgallant-sail. Our fire was kept up as rapidly as possible during the remainder of the chase. The stranger's speed being much greater than ours, he soon ranged ahead, and rapidly increased the distance between us.

In order to avoid running ashore, we now with our port helm brought the stranger to bear on our port bow, and manned the port battery, keeping up the fire with the forecastle pivot rifle. Finding we had but three fathoms water, and the landmarks being rendered invisible by the darkness, we abandoned the chase at about half past six, P. M., having continued the chase about half an hour after opening fire. During most of this time, the stranger was directly to leeward, and we were obliged to hold our fire till the smoke from our guns cleared away sufficiently for us to see and bring the guns to bear upon him. When we hauled off he was scarcely distinguishable, and was close under the guns of Fort Morgan, in the channel leading up the bay. The gunboat Winona, and the schooner Rachel Seaman, assisted in the chase, but being engaged working the guns of my division, I did not notice their movements, except that they opened fire immediately after we did.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

F. S. BROWN, *Lieut. U. S. N.*

In reply to your questions I will add, —

1st. The crew were at quarters and the ship cleared for action in ample season, and when the character of the chase became apparent you did, in my opinion, do your utmost to overtake, capture, or destroy her.

2d. I know of no duty committed to a commanding officer that you omitted on that occasion.

3d. So far as I observed, you did exhibit energy, zeal, and anxiety, in the pursuit to overtake and capture the chase.

4th. I cannot suggest any precautions that were omitted.

Very respectfully, &c.

F. S. BROWN, *Lieutenant*.

Commander GEO. HENRY PREBLE, U. S. N., U. S. S. Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 8, 1862.

SIR, — In compliance with your order I respectfully submit the following true copy of the log of this ship, from meridian to 8, P. M., on the 4th day of September, ult. The vessel reported at 2<sup>h</sup> bearing S. S. W, was the schooner Rachel Seaman, then thought to be a mortar vessel.

From meridian to 4. — At 2 a sail reported bearing S. S. W. At 3.35, made a sail bearing S. S. E. During the watch two of the rebel steamers cruising around between the forts.

(Signed)

ELIJAH ROSS.

From 4 to 8. — At 4.10, made signal to Winona 10 73. At 4.25, fired the howitzer. At 5.05, a sail reported bearing S. E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. At 5.15, made signal to Winona 282. At 5.30, got under way and stood for the strange steamer. At 5.45, went to quarters, discovered her to be a barkentine-rigged steamer with English pennant and ensign flying, carrying eight broadside, and one or two pivot guns; had the appearance of a man-of-war. At 6, fired a shot across her bows which passed unnoticed, two more were also fired across her bows and failed to bring her to. At 6.03, fired into her with the starboard battery and both pivot guns. At 6.05, she hauled down the English ensign. At 6.10, she set the foretopsail and topgallant-sail. The gunboat Winona and a mortar schooner opened on her immediately after we did. The enemy trained his guns on us, but did not fire. At 6.27, ceased firing and hauled off, being in three fathoms water, and the darkness rendering the landmarks invisible.

Fired from the forward 11 inch gun, 5 shell 5" and 1 shrapnell, after 11 inch gun, 5 shell 5", 2 of 10" and 1 shrapnell. Forward pivot rifle, 14 Dahlgren bolts and 1 Shenkl shell. Starboard broadside, 32 pounder, 1 shell 5", howitzer, 1 cannister. At 6.45, stood out for our anchorage. At 7.30,

came to with port anchor in  $9\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms water, veered to 30 fathoms chain. At 7.35, Winona anchored on our port beam.

(Signed)

FRED. I. NAILE.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

F. S. BROWN, *Lieutenant*.

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop Oneida, off Mobile.

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UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 10, 1862. }

SIR, — I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. requesting a statement of the chase of the rebel steamer Oreto by this ship on the 4th ult., and also answers to several questions concerning matters connected with that affair.

The steamer was first seen about 5, P. M. ; bearing about S. E. to S. E. by S., and upon black smoke being seen from her, the order was given to spread the fires and call all hands up anchor. The anchor being up this ship steamed out toward the strange sail, the awnings being furled, decks cleared, and crew called to quarters in ample time for any emergency. The steamer stood on about N. W. and as we neared her our helm was apparently put to starboard so as not to shoot past him, but to range up alongside. I say apparently, because, as I was stationed upon the forecastle I could hear no orders which were given from the after part of the ship. While we were turning I was ordered by the first lieutenant from the bridge to throw a shot across the stranger's bows from the pivot rifle. I obeyed, and loading again instantly, was ordered to repeat the shot which I did, and was then ordered to fire close across his forefeet, which shot I aimed and fired myself, the shot striking close under his bows. The order was then given to fire into the stranger, and the fire was kept up as long as there was the least chance of hitting him. But for his superior speed which enabled him to draw ahead of us, nothing would have saved him from capture or destruction.

The resemblance to a *regular English gunboat* was perfect, and I must confess, that until the Oreto was close to us, I felt sure that the stranger was one of the number of *English steamers (men-of-war)* which I have seen inspecting the blockade during the last fifteen months.

The first three of your question, ssir, I believe I have answered in the above remarks ; with regard to the fourth I can only say, that I hoped the the second shot would have been fired into the stranger, even had he proved afterward to be an English man-of-war.

Hoping, sir, that the apparently hasty manner in which your case has been

treated may be reconsidered, and that we may soon welcome you to command this ship again.

I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

FRANCIS M. GREEN, *Acting Master.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, U. S. N., Commanding Steam Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862.

SIR,—In compliance with your request I make the following statement as far as my knowledge extends, relating to circumstances attending the chase of the rebel gunboat Oreto, by this ship.

On the evening of September 4th, near 5, P. M., I heard the masthead lookout report a sail bearing about S. E. Made her out to be a steamer making black smoke. The Winona was immediately signalled to chase the strange steamer, which she did. The order was then given by you to get under way. At 5.30, P. M., we got under way and stood toward strange steamer, which at that time had *every appearance in hull and rig of being an English gunboat*, and readily approaching us. As soon as we were under way, the order was given by you to beat to quarters and clear the ship for action. At 5.45, P. M., the stranger approached near enough to make her out distinctly to be a barkentine-rigged vessel, flying an English pennant and ensign. At 6, P. M., we came within about one fourth of a mile of her, and fired one shot across her bow. She paid no attention to it, hailed her and fired two more across her bow, receiving no answer. We then fired into her, she hauling down her colors, and set her foretopsail and foretopgallant-sail. The order was then given to starboard our helm for the purpose of bringing the ship in position, that our guns might be trained upon her. As she was much faster than this ship she soon steamed ahead of us, we having steam in one boiler only, finding it necessary to repair the other. I heard your orders repeatedly given to go ahead faster. We continued the chase and fired upon her, until she was under the protection of the guns of Fort Morgan. At about 6.30, P. M., it being too dark to see the objects on shore, and in three fathoms water, ceased firing and hauled off.

In my opinion your ship was prepared and cleared for action in the promptest manner, and under the circumstances you left nothing undone that could have been done, and I have every reason to believe you did your utmost to "take, capture, and destroy" the vessel you were in pursuit of. There is no duty that I could see at the time that you omitted, and you showed the greatest energy, zeal, and anxiety to overtake and capture the chase.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOMAS EDWARDS, *Acting Master.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — In compliance with your request, I make the following statement : On September 4th, at 5, P. M., the masthead look-out reported a sail to the S. E. ; you gave orders to get under way and stand toward her. Immediately after getting under way, cleared for action. As we neared the stranger, I saw she had the English ensign and pennant flying, and *from her build and spars supposed her to be an English gunboat*. When about a mile from her, you gave orders to go to quarters. I repaired to my station on the berth-deck, and I got every thing ready for battle. I then went up the fore-hatch ladder to see if the men were in their stations to receive ammunition on the spar-deck, and saw the stranger about two cable's lengths from us, and two points forward our starboard beam. You gave orders to starboard our helm, as he was crossing our bows, which brought him more abeam. You then gave orders to give a shot across his bows from the fore-castle gun. This and another being fired, and the starboard battery with both pivot guns (11-inch) trained on the stranger, I went below. I heard in all three guns from the fore-castle, and then the order to fire into her. The firing was continued for half an hour, when I received orders to close magazine and shell-room. After doing so I went on deck, and saw the strange steamer under the protection of the guns of Fort Morgan, and that we had chased her within the range of the fort. As we were in shoal water, and it being too dark to distinguish land objects, we had hauled off for an anchorage.

I consider you did all that could have been done to capture the steamer, after discovering she was an enemy.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

ELIJAH ROSS, *Acting Master*.

To Commander G. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — In compliance with your request, I make the following statement : On the morning of the 4th of September, with your permission, I hauled the fires off the port boiler of this ship for the purpose of stopping a leak in one of the tubes, which was so large as to necessitate the almost constant use of the donkey pump when the engines were not in motion. The fires were kept banked, with a full pressure of steam in the starboard boiler. I succeeded in doing the necessary work, and got a working pressure of steam on the port boiler at 7.30, P. M.

At 5.30, P. M., the ship was got under way with one boiler and chased the Confederate gunboat Oreto, but necessarily at much less than our usual speed. At 6.27, the chase was abandoned, the water becoming too shoal to continue it.

Under the most favorable circumstances, this ship makes  $10\frac{1}{2}$  knots, under steam alone, with sixty-six revolutions per minute of engines. A greater velocity of engines cannot be maintained, owing to the very imperfect vacuum which obtains in the condenser, a defect which has always existed, notwithstanding many expedients have been tried to remedy it.

In my opinion, you cleared your ship for action in the promptest manner, and exhibited the greatest energy, zeal, and anxiety to overtake and capture the chase.

I am respectfully, &c.,

(Signed)

F. C. DADE, *Chief Engineer.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, U. S. N., Commanding United States Steam Sloop Oneida.

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UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR,—In compliance with the request contained in your note of this date, I would make the following statement of the circumstances, “so far as” my “knowledge extends,” attending the chase of the Oreto by this ship, on the afternoon and evening of September 4th.

I think it was about half past five o'clock that I heard of a sail being reported to the eastward, and shortly after going on deck saw black smoke in that direction which was steadily approaching us.

We soon got under way, and steamed, slowly however, directly toward the stranger.

That the crew were at quarters some time before we came up to the Oreto, I can affirm, as I did not leave the poop till after the rattle had been sprung, delaying there a few minutes longer, expecting that the approaching “English gunboat” would heave to on our first fire, but as she did not, I went below upon the second firing of the forecastle gun, and am therefore unable to give an account of the action that followed.

During the morning I had heard that the fires had been hauled from under one of our boilers to allow of necessary repairs to the tubes, some of which had become entirely corroded, *iron* being used in their manufacture instead of “composition.” I heard the order given to lay the fires about half past two.

I do not think more than four shots had been fired, when, being in the ward-room, I heard you on deck give the order *several* times to go ahead *faster*, and on going out into the steerage country, inquired what was the matter, when one of the engineers told me that the engines were doing the best the steam would then allow, owing to the recent repairs to one of the boilers. Thus, our *want of steam*, caused by a mistaken idea of economy, in using iron pipes in the boilers of this ship, may have been the *real* and *only* cause that prevented us from keeping up with and “*overtaking*,” and finally “capturing or destroying the enemy.”

Soon I noticed, hearing the increased distances given for firing, that the Oreto was rapidly leaving us. I noticed also that the whole of our star-board battery was discharged at once, as I afterwards heard, the smoke of our guns was blown so as to hide the chase and prevent accurate aim.

When I went on deck, we were in about three fathoms water, as I heard from the leadsmen, and the Oreto was quite under cover of the guns of Fort Morgan.

I quote from your note, "Did you perceive any want of energy, zeal, or vigilance on my part?" No, sir; on the contrary, the energy and zeal with which you *begun* the action, and, as far as my observation extended, *continued* it, will always be remembered by me.

Of vigilance there certainly was no neglect, for the Winona would doubtless have been at her station to the *eastward*, had not your *vigilance* sent her to chase a schooner to the *westward*, a schooner that did not display any flag during the chase by the Winona, nor, I hear, afterwards during the action. This was the Rachel Seaman.

Had there been more vessels under your command, I feel assured one would have been then stationed to the eastward of the fort, as you had previously ordered. It seems strange that the Oncida and Winona were the only vessels here at that special time to guard this important port, while both before and since as many as six have been on this station at once, the others then undergoing repairs at Pensacola.

That the ship was cleared for action and the crew at quarters I have stated above, and that you did not fail to do your "utmost to overtake, capture, or destroy the vessel we were pursuing," was evident to myself, who heard your repeated orders for quicker firing, and cautions to greater accuracy of aim, as well as to those to the engineers.

I again quote your note, "What duty, the plainest and most ordinary committed to an officer did I omit on that occasion?"

I have carefully read the Act approved July 17, 1862, Arts. 1 and 2, and paragraphs 9 and 10 of Art. 3, which relates to "Commanders of Vessels," and cannot imagine any duty there enumerated which you failed to perform on that occasion.

You advanced toward the stranger with your crew at quarters, you gave battle, you chased him, and endeavored to overtake and capture or destroy that vessel of the enemy which it was your "duty" to encounter.

Hoping you will excuse the seeming freedom with which this is written,  
I am, sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

C. W. HASSLER, *Paymaster.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States States Steam Sloop Oncida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — In reply to your request, I have to state such of the circumstances as came under my observation, attending the chase of the rebel steamer Oreto by this vessel on the evening of September 4th ult.

Having nothing at once to employ me in my own department beyond being prepared for action, I remained on the quarter deck deeply interested in the events that were transpiring.

Immediately upon a strange sail having been reported, the Oneida got under way at 5.30, P. M., and stood seaward in his direction, beating to quarters soon afterward. The gunboat Winona (our only consort on the blockade at the time), was also ordered by you to chase at discretion, and came up on our starboard beam. The Winona had but just returned from chasing to the westward a schooner which proved to be the Rachel Seaman.

All the movements were made with promptitude, and the ship was cleared for action long before she was within gunshot of the stranger.

The latter steering directly for the entrance to the harbor, was soon near enough to show himself to be a barkentine-rigged propeller, with topgallant-yards crossed, bearing the English ensign at the peak, apparently deeply laden, and mounting several guns; *altogether having the appearance of an English gunboat.*

The Oneida was not making a high rate of speed, on account of using only one boiler, the other was undergoing some necessary and almost completed repairs. But as the strange steamer approached, our course was altered a little, so as to cross his bows, — a manœuvre which the Winona not imitating, fell considerable away astern of him.

When within probably one fourth of a mile, a shot was fired to bring him to, and when still nearer he was hailed by yourself, and another shot fired across her bows, none of which elicited any attention whatsoever, it was observed that there were very few men visible about his decks.

The two ships were now near to each other, the stranger appeared to swerve a little to starboard from his course, it may be to avoid collision, an event which had both held on, seemed not at all improbable. The Oneida then put her helm starboard, thus bringing the two vessels nearly abeam of each other, and this was truly the critical moment for the Oreto. As she continued to pass us with undiminished speed, her real intention began to be evident, another shot was fired very near, and immediately by your orders the starboard broadside opened upon her.

The enemy at once hauled down the English colors, and commenced training his guns upon us, though he did not fire at that time, but soon after attempted to make sail.

From the instant the true character of the disguised steamer became known to you, the fire of this vessel as well as that of the Winona was unremittingly kept up until darkness and distance and the proximity of shoal water put an end to the chase.

When at the space of perhaps 1,000 or 1,500 yards, and nearly under the guns of Fort Morgan, the rebel steamer fired a shot, and after some interval another, both of which passed away harmlessly.

The schooner *Rachel Seaman* was a distant spectator of all the scene, and fired a few guns in the direction of the *Oreto*.

I cheerfully bear witness, sir, that on this occasion, so far as my knowledge extends to such matters, you did your utmost to "capture or destroy" this vessel of the enemy from the moment you recognized her as such, and the ship was cleared for action in due time; neither did you in any manner whatever, manifest a want of energy or zeal in your official acts.

Of course it is easy to see *now* when we are in possession of all the facts how this affair might have been made to terminate in another way. But how shall any one say conscientiously, that under precisely similar circumstances, he would have acted differently, and what man *might* not hesitate one moment only, when his next step may do a grievous and irreparable injury to the flag and honor of a nation with whom we are yet, at least, ostensibly at peace.

In relation to the third and last question contained in your note of this morning, it only remains for me to say, that what the "plainest and most ordinary duties" committed to an officer are, I do not know. In conclusion, sir, I beg leave to express to you my sincere regret at an event which has rendered necessary this communication.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN Y. TAYLOR, *Surgeon*.

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop *Oneida* off Mobile.

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UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP *ONEIDA*, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — In compliance with your request, I make the following statement of all that I can recollect, as has come under my observation, on the evening of September 4th, during the chase of the rebel gunboat into Mobile Bay.

At about 5.30 heard all hands called to quarters, went to my station on deck, found *Oneida* standing toward a strange steamer coming in from the eastward, making black smoke, and distant about five miles. Every preparation was made for battle. At about 6 made stranger out to be a barkentine, flying English ensign and pennant, and heading directly for us. She carried eight broadside and one or two pivot guns, *looked exactly like English gunboats that I have seen along our coast*. When she came within rifle range fired a shot across her bow, but she continued on her course paying no attention to it; fired a shot across her fore foot but without heaving her to; fired a second shot across her fore foot but with the same result as at first. She was now within hailing distance. Captain Preble hailed her, but receiv-

ing no answer, he gave orders to fire into her, which was done by all the starboard battery, and by both 11 inch guns. The enemy hauled down his colors, put his helm aport and ran away from us. We followed, but she gained on us. Captain Preble gave orders to go ahead as fast as possible. Heard answer returned from engine room, that "we were doing our best," still continued the firing, but the enemy gained on us so fast that in less than 15 minutes we had increased our elevation from 400 to 1000 yards.

By this time the enemy were under the guns of Fort Morgan. As it was getting dusk the Oneida had followed him into 3 fathoms water. We had no pilots, and were therefore forced to go about, and stand off shore.

I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. W. WOOD, *Midshipman*.

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — In compliance with your request, I make the following statement in regard to the Oreto :

I was officer of the deck on the afternoon of September 4th, at the time the Oreto ran the blockade. At 5.05, a steamer was reported bearing S. E.  $\frac{1}{2}$  E. making black smoke, and standing towards us. The Winona was then returning from the southward and westward from chasing the United States schooner Rachel Seaman. Signalized her to chase the steamer at discretion. When first seen, the steamer was hull down about ten miles off, and was reported by the masthead look-out, to be the Susquehanna, and supposed by us to be the Connecticut. At 5.30, got under way and stood towards her. She was then distant about seven miles. At 5.45, went to quarters, discovered her to be a barkentine-rigged steamer flying English pennant and ensign, and *having every appearance of being an English gunboat, which every one on board supposed her to be*. At 6, fired a shot across her bows, she paid no attention to it, hailed her, and fired two more ; receiving no reply fired into her. She trained her gun on us, but did not fire. Continued to chase until 6.27, when being in shoal water, and too dark to distinguish objects on shore, ceased firing and hauled off.

The Winona, after answering our signal, stood so as to come up astern of the stranger steamer, and kept that position during the chase. She as well as the Rachel Seaman opened fire on the steamer immediately after we did.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

FRED. I. NAILE, *Midshipman*.

To Commander G. H. PREBLE, U. S. S. Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile, October 8, 1862. }

SIR, — Agreeably to your request, I make the following statement of my knowledge of the circumstances attending the chase of the Oreto, on the occasion of her running the blockade into Mobile Bay on the 4th ult. The time given is according to the deck time-piece.

It was at 5.05, P. M., she hove in sight. The Winona being under way, having spoken the Rachel Seaman, you directed me to make signal to the Winona "to chase at discretion," which I did, she answering it 5.15. At 5.30 we got under way, the stranger then being distant I should think about six or seven miles. Seeing that she wore the English ensign and pennant, the ship by your order was cleared for action, and at 5.45 "all hands" were at quarters.

We neared the stranger, and when within speaking distance, you hailed him from the poop, but receiving no answer, you ordered a shot to be fired across his bows, which was done, followed by two others in rapid succession; this was at 6 o'clock, and at 6.03, the stranger not heeding the shots across his bows, you gave orders to "*fire into him*," which was instantly commenced by the 11-inch guns followed by the forecastle rifle gun, and the starboard battery. At 6.05 the English flag was hauled down, but his engines still working, you directed the firing to be continued. At 6.10, he attempted to make sail, but only partially succeeded.

The firing continued unabated until 6.27, P. M., when it ceased, the vessel being so much faster than this vessel, having succeeded in getting into the main channel leading into the bay.

I was on the poop with you most of the time, being sent by you to the engine room several times, to inquire if we could not increase our speed, each time receiving from the engineer on watch, the answer that they could do no better.

When we had "rounded to" and abandoned the chase, you called to the first lieutenant and asked if there was no way in which we could get in, and "get at that fellow," exhibiting the utmost anxiety to capture or destroy him. At 7.30, we returned to our anchorage.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. FRANK DALTON, *Captain's Clerk.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, U. S. Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
Off Mobile Bay, October 10, 1862. }

Sir, — On the 4th of September last, when the steamer Oreto ran into Mobile bay, the chances for her capture were most unfavorable.

We had during the day been repairing one of our boilers, and had started fires under it only a short time previous to the steamer making her appear-

ance ; the boiler had not sufficient time to generate steam ; we were therefore deprived of half our power, and compelled to confine our speed to a much smaller limit than our maximum. Had the affair occurred an hour later, the result would have been different.

Your energy as displayed on that occasion, could certainly not have been questioned by those who were familiar with the circumstances. Every thing was done that could have been done, to defeat her intentions, and no exertion was left untried to prevent her entering.

The escape of the Oreto could not, in our opinion, have been justly attributed to any dereliction of duty on your part, while the existing circumstances were so favorable to her.

Hoping the affair may be reviewed in its proper light, and you absolved from all blame or censure,

We remain respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES H. MORRISON, *2d Assistant Engineer.*  
 HORACE McMARTIE,                   "           "  
 R. H. FITCH,                           "           "  
 W. D. McILVAINE, *3d Assistant Engineer.*  
 ALFRED S. BROWER,               "           "

Commander G. H. PREBLE, U. S. N., U. S. Steam Sloop Oneida.

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UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
 Off Mobile, October 9, 1862. }

SIR, — At about 5, p. m., of September 4th, a sail was reported coming from S. E., and by the look-out man said to be the United States steamer Susquehanna. She proved to be a screw steamer and making black smoke. We immediately got under way and stood for her, and then went to quarters. I repaired to the magazine, which by the orders of the officer of the division, opened and passed up the ammunition.

We remained at quarters about an hour and twenty minutes, during which we fired the following projectiles, namely, — 19 Dahlgren shells, 3 Schenkl shells ; 10 shells 5", 2 shells 10", 2 Shrapnell, from 11-inch pivots ; and 1 shell 5" from 32 pounder.

After the retreat, having secured the magazine, I went on deck, and it being dark I could see nothing of the stranger. We then returned to our anchorage.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

WILLIAM PARKER, *Acting Gunner.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop Oneida.

UNITED STATES STEAM SLOOP ONEIDA, }  
 Off Mobile, October 8, 1862. }

SIR,— On the 4th of September 1862, between the hours of 4 and 5, P. M., a sail was reported from the masthead, said by the look-out to be the United States steamer *Susquehanna*. We immediately got under way and stood for her, and called all hands to quarters. I then went to the *masthead*, that being my station at quarters, when on looking at the sail through the glass, I perceived she was a steamer flying English colors, and I took her to be a man-of-war. We stood on until we got within range of her, when we fired a shot from the 30 pounder pivot rifle gun across her bows. Previous to this I could plainly see about twenty or thirty men on her deck, but after we fired the first shot, all but two or three went below, which could not be seen from our deck; she then ran across our bows, at which time I saw only one man forward, one running aft, and one at the wheel.

Our captain then hailed her, but received no answer, and we then fired two more shots across her bows, when she hauled down the English flag. This at first I took to be done in token of surrender, but immediately afterward I saw a number of men come up from below and go forward, I thought for the purpose of manning the pivot gun, but they went aloft and loosed the foretopsail and topgallant-sail which were then set.

The steamer carried six broadside guns and one ten inch pivot gun forward, to the best of my knowledge. While they were loosing the sail we fired into her and kept up a continuous fire until she got out of range. Several of our shot struck her, though she did not for a moment slacken her speed.

Finding that she continued to gain on us rapidly, and as we were now very close to the ruined light-house on Sand Island, it being now dark, we wore around and returned to anchorage.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JAMES HAROLD, *Acting Boatswain.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, United States Steam Sloop *Oneida*.

## LETTERS FROM COMMANDING OFFICERS

ON THE

MOBILE BLOCKADE, WESTERN GULF BLOCKADING SQUADRON.

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UNITED STATES STEAMER BROOKLYN, }  
Off Mobile, October 12, 1862. }

DEAR PREBLE,—You will find the letters from Secretary Welles to yourself in the packages sent on board to you. I wish you complete and thorough success in your attempt to obtain legal and equitable justice from the powers that rule. It would give me great joy to hear of it.

The Admiral has written me a note stating that Jenkins has arrived in the Rhode Island to relieve you. She will be here in two days' time, having stopped at Pensacola to take in coal.

Yours, very cordially,

H. H. BELL, *Commodore.*

Captain PREBLE, Oneida.

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UNITED STATES STEAMER BROOKLYN, }  
Off Mobile, October 21, 1862. }

MY DEAR SIR,—I can state with pleasure in reply to your letter of October 14th, that during the time I was Fleet Captain of the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, you were always prompt, active, and energetic in the discharge of your duties as commanding officer of a gunboat.

I am very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. H. BELL, *Commodore.*

GEO. H. PREBLE, Esq., late Commander United States Navy.

UNITED STATES STEAM GUNBOAT CAYUGA, }  
Off Mobile Bar, October 10, 1862. }

DEAR SIR,—In a letter of yours dated the 9th inst. you request me to state, “whether, when the senior officer on this blockade, you did your utmost to preserve the blockade, and was vigilant in the discharge of your duties? Whether, at any time, I saw any remissness? Where I was with the Cayuga when the rebel steamer ran in, and why I was sent to the westward? Whether I either before you became senior officer, or since you was relieved from that responsibility, have seen in you any want of energy, zeal, or activity, or failure to perform duties assigned you?”

It is with pleasure that I bear testimony to your having evinced the greatest anxiety that, *with the small force you had under your command*, the blockade should be rendered effective; that you did your utmost to preserve the blockade by a vigilant discharge of your duties, nor have I seen any remissness, any want of zeal, energy, or activity, or failure to perform duties assigned you.

On the morning of the same day that the Confederate steamer ran the blockade, the Cayuga was sent to Petit Bois and Horn Island Passes, to discover, if possible, whether any vessels were running into the Sound from Grant’s Pass, and through the Outer Passes, eluding the vigilance of our cruisers, and did not return off Mobile until 11, P. M., of the same day.

Your letters to Admiral Farragut do not give many details, which would have enabled him to place matters before the Navy Department more favorable to your interest than in his letter. *Unintentionally*, the Admiral’s letter has caused such summary action on the part of the Government.

I cannot but hope that when you lay the case before the *President*, he will do you ample justice by reinstating you in your original position, and *then* ordering a court to investigate your conduct on the occasion referred to.

Your long service in the Navy, most honorable and creditable to you, entitles you to much consideration. I am sure that you *will* obtain justice at the hands of the Navy Department, and I feel that *all your brother officers* will deeply enter into your present troubles, and wish you a speedy end to them, and restoration to a fine command.

I remain, very truly,

D. McN. FAIRFAX, *Commander, U. S. N.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, Commanding Oneida, off Mobile.

UNITED STATES STEAMER SUSQUEHANNA, }  
Pensacola, Florida, October 13, 1862. }

CAPTAIN G. H. PREBLE,

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received yours of the 8th inst. in relation to your “dismissal for neglect of duty.” You ask me to state the nature of the

difficulties of the blockade off Mobile;—my opinion as to a steamer running the blockade of the Oneida and one gunboat, without neglect of duty on the part of the commanding officer;—also, whether, while I was senior officer off Mobile, I discovered any lack of zeal or energy in you.

It was with surprise and pain that I saw a statement in the newspaper of your dismissal from the naval service, after the statement you made to me of the occurrence of the 4th of September. I supposed that any of us of good standing in the service, would be allowed a hearing,—the justice of which is apparent in your case. As you state that your report was made to the Admiral, in part written—hastily drawn up—and the details to be filled up by the officer whom you sent to make the report, a transmission of your *written* report alone to the Navy Department is certainly (as you say), not placing *your* full statement before your judges.

That you should have exercised great care in firing into a vessel you had good reason to suppose an English man-of-war is reasonable. If your fire failed to destroy the vessel after you had commenced it, from any want of efficiency, justice would point out that the responsibility should be divided between you and the officer previously in command of the ship, so far as the training of the officers and crew were concerned.

As to the difficulties of the blockade off Mobile, while senior officer at that place, I *repeatedly stated* to the *Admiral* and to the *Navy Department* that the force under my charge (the *Susquehanna*, *Kanawha*, and *Preble*), were not able to make the blockade efficient. A larger force since then has not been able to prevent the running out of vessels, and I have yet to learn that any one competent to judge will say that the officers stationed there have not done their *whole* duty to prevent it.

In relation to your zeal and efficiency while under my orders off Mobile. I found you anxious to do all in your power to make the blockade effective, and in every way competent to do all that any officer could do with your command.

I truly hope that the Government will so far rescind their action in your case as to give you the opportunity of placing your case before it.

With respect and kind regard,

Truly yours,

R. B. HITCHCOCK, *Captain, U. S. N.*

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UNITED STATES STEAMER RICHMOND, }  
Off Navy Yard, Pensacola, October 15, 1862. }

DEAR SIR,—Yours of the 8th inst. propounding certain questions relating to your present difficulty is received, and I hasten to reply.

As an evidence of my thinking that the blockading forces off Mobile were properly organized, when I relieved you, I did not consider it necessary to alter it in the slightest particular.

As to your energy and zeal in the service, I always thought that those

qualities shone out to a remarkable degree from among those which have given you so high a stand with your brother officers in the Navy.

I will not, therefore, believe that a wise government like ours would dispense with the services of such an officer, except under a wrong impression of his acts, and that you will be given an opportunity to *establish* the *fact* of your having done your *whole duty* in this matter (which will result in a triumphant acquittal), I am as certain as I am that the sun shines.

Respectfully yours,

JAMES ALDEN, *Commander*.

Captain GEO. HENRY PREBLE, United States Navy.

UNITED STATES GUNBOAT KENNEBEC, }  
Off Mobile Bay, October 19, 1862. }

DEAR PREBLE,—I take pleasure in replying to your letter of the 14th inst. and adding my testimony to that of your many friends, of your efficiency and zeal in the discharge of your duties as a naval officer—and I believe the cloud which now hangs over your official reputation will soon be cleared away. Your course on the Mississippi River was such as to merit the approval of all, and *no one* would doubt for a moment that you would do your utmost to pursue and capture the enemies of your country. Wishing you every success, believe me,

Truly your friend,

JNO. H. RUSSELL, *Lieutenant-Commander, U. S. N.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE.

UNITED STATES STEAMER RHODE ISLAND, }  
At Sea, November 2, 1862. }

SIR,—In answer to your letter requesting a statement as to the manner in which you performed your duties while we were associated together in the Western Gulf Blockading Squadron, I must say, that, so far as came within my observation, you performed your duties in a manner highly creditable to yourself, and such as to gain the high respect of your brother officers. I trust that when the cause of your present difficulty has been explained, that you will be restored to your position in the Navy, with your reputation as unblemished as it was prior to your dismissal.

With great respect,

I remain yours,

PEIRCE CROSBY, *Lieutenant-Commander*.

GEO. H. PREBLE, Late Commander United States Navy.

UNITED STATES STEAMER BIENVILLE, }  
Off Charleston, S. C., October 5, 1862. }

MY DEAR PREBLE,—I have just heard with sincere regret of the misfortune that has overtaken you, and as an old shipmate permit me to offer you my sincere sympathy.

I have heard nothing but the most lively expression of regret throughout this division of the squadron in relation to the matter, and I feel quite certain that the announcement of your restoration to the service at an early date, would be received with very great pleasure by *all* the officers on this station.

If I can be of any service to you, I need not assure you how cheerfully it will be rendered.

With sentiments of respect and esteem,

I remain very truly yours,

J. R. M. MULLANY, *Commander*.

GEO. H. PREBLE, U. S. N., Portland, Maine.

LETTER FROM LIEUTENANT COMMANDER JAMES S. THORNTON,  
OF THE U. S. STEAM GUNBOAT WINONA.

NEW YORK CITY, ASTOR HOUSE, }  
November 28, 1862. }

MY DEAR SIR,—I should have written to you before, but my time has been entirely occupied with my own affairs.

In regard to the escape of the *Oreto*, and her success in running the blockade, I have never heard but one opinion expressed among our brother officers, and they all, with one accord, agree that it was one of the unfortunate events which no human foresight could prevent, and one which any and every officer is liable to experience on similar service. I certainly was as much deceived in her character as yourself, and felt satisfied that she was an English “man-of-war” desiring to communicate with the blockading vessels. Her English build and rig, her English ensign and pennant, and her boldness in approaching, all served to convince me that she was a British cruiser. During the whole period of my service on the blockade, the utmost vigilance was exercised by the different vessels of the squadron under your command; and, had we been informed (it was known at Pensacola) that a rebel vessel of that description was at sea, I have no doubt but that a different result might have been attained; but the information came decidedly *too late*.

After her true character and design was discovered, every effort was made to capture or destroy her. That she was struck several times by the fire of both vessels, I was certain at the time, and the rebel accounts assert that she was literally covered with our projectiles, and that she lost four men killed, and had a number wounded. There was a heavy sea on at the

time, which interfered materially with the accuracy of the fire of both the "Oneida" and "Winona." The next morning after the chase, I was sent in the Winona to Pensacola for the purpose of communicating with the Admiral. I took with me your note communicating the event to the Admiral, and also had instructions to explain in detail all the circumstances connected with the escape of the Oreto. This I did, so far as I was myself informed, but at that time I was not aware that one of the Oneida's boilers was disabled, nor did I become aware of that fact, until subsequently, when I met you on board of the Rhode Island at Pensacola. When I reported to the Admiral at Pensacola, he informed me that the rebels had two vessels afloat, both of them answering generally to the description I had given of the chase. I returned immediately to Mobile with that information, and a letter from the Admiral addressed to yourself. I am certain that every effort that skill, zeal, and energy could dictate was made to capture or destroy the Oreto after her designs became manifest, and I now *know* that the untimely accident to one of the Oneida's boilers *alone* prevented her capture by the vessel.

I fully believe the Department will rescind its hasty act of dismissal, and grant you the customary Court of Inquiry, before which the evidence of your zeal and energy must appear conclusive.

Truly your friend,

JAS. S. THORNTON, *Lieutenant-Commander.*

Commander GEO. H. PREBLE, Cambridge, Mass.

FLAG-SHIP HARTFORD,     }  
New Orleans, November 28, 1862. }

MY DEAR PREBLE,

I inclose you a letter from Captain Hewitt, of the English sloop of war Rinaldo, who knows well the Oreto, and his opinion of her resemblance to a British man-of-war may be of some service to you.

We all hope here that the Government will give you the investigation you demand.

In haste, yours very truly,

JAS. PALMER.

H. M. S. RINALDO,     }  
New Orleans, November 27, 1862. }

DEAR CAPTAIN PALMER,

Having heard, in conversation with you, that Commander Preble, of the United States Navy, had been dismissed in consequence of allowing the Oreto to pass his vessel, she being at the time employed in blockading Mobile, I beg to offer the following remarks with regard to the Oreto,

which you are at perfect liberty to use, should they be productive of any thing that would tend to alleviate the censure cast upon Commander Preble.

When at Nassau, in June last, we met the Oreto, and she was reported as an English despatch vessel by my signal man, as well as others.

She was painted like a British vessel of war, and on going on board I found her fittings the same as our vessels of the same class. Had I met the Oreto at sea, armed, and wearing a pendant, I should have taken her for one of our ships.

Yours, very sincerely,

W. N. W. HEWITT, *Commander, R. N.*

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UNITED STATES SHIP MINNESOTA, }  
Portsmouth, N. H., November 16, 1862. }

MY DEAR PREBLE,

I have just seen your statement in the papers, and consider it a complete vindication of your conduct.

I hope to see you soon restored to a service which you have always honored.

In great haste,

I remain very truly yours,

N. B. HARRISON, *Commanding Minnesota.*

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LOWELL, MASS., Jan. 19, 1863.

DEAR SIR, — I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th inst., together with the pamphlet.

I shall be *glad* to bear my testimony to your efficiency and vigilance while on service in the Mississippi.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

BENJ. F. BUTLER, *Major-General U. S. Vol.*

Commander GEO. HENRY PREBLE, Cambridge, Mass.

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EXTRACT FROM DE HART ON COURTS-MARTIAL. Page 236.

"I am aware that many Presidents have exercised the power in question. But a strong negative is found in the fact that every officer so dismissed from the army has, on demand to that effect, been restored, and allowed the benefit of a trial by his peers. The dismissed officers who neglected to make such a demand, and who were therefore never restored, probably looked upon their arbitrary dismissal as an act of mercy to themselves respectively, as covering up the details of guilt and shame which otherwise would have gone on judicial record and been made perpetual."

# PROCEEDINGS

OF THE INFORMAL BOARD CONVENED BY ORDER OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT, December 10, 1862.

SIR,—A Naval Board of which you are the senior officer, is hereby directed to convene without unnecessary delay, for the purpose of considering and reporting upon the case of Mr. George Henry Preble, late a commander in the Navy.

Mr. Preble was dismissed from the naval service on the 20th of September last, because, in the opinion of the department, he had been guilty of neglect of duty in permitting an armed steamer known as the *Oreto* to run the blockade, and escape into the harbor of Mobile, while he was in command of the blockading force off that place.

To the action of the Department in his case, Mr. Preble takes exception. He avers that he did his whole duty on the occasion referred to, and asks an investigation. As he is no longer an officer of the Navy, a court-martial cannot be ordered for his trial. A Board is therefore appointed for the purpose of inquiring into the matter, and of reporting whether or not, in its opinion, Commander Preble performed his whole duty, as senior officer of the force blockading Mobile, and did his utmost to prevent the passage of the steamer *Oreto* into the harbor.

In making up its opinion on this subject, the Board will confine its examinations to the three reports of Commander Preble, herewith transmitted, and dated respectively September 4, September 6, and October 10, 1862. The Department desires the Board to consider these statements alone of Commander Preble himself, *excluding all other matter*, and to hold no communication with any one on the subject of inquiry until after its written report shall have been submitted.

Commodore Chas. H. Davis and Lieutenant-Commander S. Ledyard Phelps, will be ordered to report to you, and will, with yourself, constitute the Board.

I am respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

GIDEON WELLES, *Secretary of the Navy.*

Rear-Admiral ANDREW H. FOOTE, United States Navy, Washington, D. C.

NAVY DEPARTMENT, December 12, 1862.

SIR, — In obedience to your order of the 10th inst., the Board consisting of Rear-Admiral A. H. Foote, senior officer, and Commodore Chas. H. Davis, and Lieutenant-Commander S. L. Phelps, members convened this morning in the room of the Bureau of Navigation, for the purpose of considering and reporting upon the case of Mr. George Henry Preble, late a Commander in the Navy.

The Board proceeded to the investigation immediately, confining its examination as it was instructed to do, to the three reports of Commander Preble, accompanying the precept, dated respectively Sept. 4th, September 6th, and October 10th, 1862.

The Board is ordered to report whether or not in its opinion Commander Preble performed his whole duty as senior officer of the force blockading Mobile, and did his utmost to prevent the passage of the steamer Oreto into that harbor.

It is the opinion of the Board that Commander Preble did not perform his whole duty as senior officer of the force blockading Mobile; and further that he did not do his utmost to prevent the passage of the steamer Oreto into the harbor, as appears from the statement contained in his report of September 6th, to Rear-Admiral Farragut, to the effect that if he had known the character of the vessel, he could have run her down.

The Board has the honor to await the further instructions of the Department.

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

A. H. FOOTE, *Rear-Admiral and Senior Officer.*

HON. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

NAVY DEPARTMENT, December 12, 1862.

SIR, — The Board convened for the purpose of considering the case of Mr. George H. Preble, having reported that in its opinion Commander Preble did not perform his whole duty, and did not do his utmost to prevent the Oreto from entering the harbor of Mobile, has requested permission to give briefly some of the reasons which have guided it to this decision.

1st. The failure to arrest the Oreto turns, in Commander Preble's three reports submitted to the Board, upon his ignorance of her character, and his supposition that she was an English man-of-war. The practice of the sea supplies a mode of ascertaining the character of a suspicious vessel, similar to the challenge of a sentinel on post. If the challenging or signal

gun had been fired in the usual manner at the usual time, according to common practice in such cases, the real character of the Oreto would have been so far made apparent that Commander Preble would have been aware of the necessity of stopping her.

2d. Owing to this neglect, the advantages of time and of position were lost; and both of these advantages were still further thrown away, first, by hailing, which is not customary or proper in such circumstances; and, secondly, by waiting to fire more than one shot across the Oreto's bow.

3d. The Board does not, by the three reports submitted to it, arrive at the conclusion that the Oreto's conduct was such as to justify her being mistaken for a British man-of-war.

4th. The Board is of the opinion that when Commander Preble arrived at the conclusion that the Oreto was a British man-of-war, he had no just motive, in this conclusion, for not proceeding to resist with force an attempted violation of the blockade.

5th. The proceedings in these cases in blockading service is the same with all nations. A signal gun, fired by the stationary or cruising vessel, conveys to the strange sail a determination to communicate, a challenge to stop, and a desire to be informed of his character. It is generally answered by a gun, and the strange sail places himself in a situation to be easily approached.

If, after this signal gun has been fired by the blockading vessel to warn the strange sail, the former should fire a shotted gun, then the latter, if a man-of-war of a foreign nation, would return the fire.

6th. Finally, Commander Preble admits that if he had known the true character of the Oreto, he could have boarded her; or, in other words, that she was in his power; and his failure to perform his whole duty consists, in the judgment of the Board, in his not having employed in season the ordinary means of ascertaining her character, and in losing the advantages of time and position still further by stopping to hail, and afterwards to fire a second and third shot across her bow.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. H. FOOTE, *Rear-Admiral and Senior Officer.*

Hon. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT, December 13, 1863.

SIR.—In accordance with a verbal understanding between the Department and yourself, your three reports of the breaking of the blockade off Mobile, by the rebel pirate Oreto in September last, have been submitted to a Board of Officers, composed of Rear-Admiral A. H. Foote, Commodore Charles H. Davis, and Lieutenant-Commander S. L. Phelps.

The two reports of the Board dated 12th inst., are herewith inclosed, and

in conformity with the understanding had with you, will be considered as terminating any further action by the Department in your case.

I am respectfully,

GIDEON WELLES, *Secretary of the Navy.*

GEO. H. PREBLE, Esq., Washington, D. C.

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 18, 1862.

SIR,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 12th inst., with the accompanying two reports of the Informal Board, convened at *your suggestion*, in my case.

From my conversation with you, I was led to infer that as you could not restore me directly, this Board, limited in its examinations, was to be the means of opening the subject anew, and presenting it to the President for reviewal. I had no idea it would be instructed *solely*, as to whether I did my *whole* duty in the matter; that I supposed was to be the subject for a future tribunal, and the *full* and *fair* investigation I have always courted. I did *not* understand its decision was to be final with the Department in my case.

My post-office address is Cambridge, Mass.

Respectfully yours,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

Hon. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy.

## REVIEW OF THE OPINIONS OF THE INFORMAL BOARD.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., December 29, 1863.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—As you have greatly interested yourself in my case, and, in common with many friends, both in and out of the Navy, have blamed me for submitting it to the action of the “Informal Board” convened by the Secretary of the Navy, allow me to tell you how that Board was formed, why I assented to it, and in a hasty manner to review its opinions.

A few days previous to the ordering of the Board, I had been accused by — of putting obstacles to my restoration in the way of the Department. This I readily denied. The Secretary had, in my interviews with him, expressed a great deal of sympathy,—said, among other things, “Sometimes it is necessary to sacrifice the individual for the public good,”—asked me “if I did not myself think it would prove injurious to the public service to restore me after the action taken by the Department,” and said, “he did not see how my restoration could be effected,” or “how I could be *directly*

restored." In all his conversations he led me to infer, that, while sustaining his own action, he was desirous of restoring me to my old place and rank. It was my understanding, that it was in this spirit he proposed to me to convene what he styled an "Informal Board" and place my three letters before it, and on their evidence to open the case anew, bring it before the President, and indirectly pave the way to my restoration. I entertained no idea that he intended it as a final judgment.\* I asked him to place all the evidence I had collected from the officers of my own ship and others, and then on file in the Department, before the proposed Board. He refused, saying it was "sympathetic evidence." I then urged to put Admiral Farragut's letters with my own before the Board, they being official, and a portion of the same correspondence. This was also refused. I then remarked it was in his power to order as many such Boards as he chose, it was not the full investigation I courted, and though it might seem fair to judge a man by his own words, still (recollecting —'s remark of the day before), they could be misunderstood, and might not convey my meaning to others. He replied he did not wish to order such a Board without my consent.

Finally, supposing this my only means of bringing my case anew before the President, and preliminary to a full investigation by a Court Martial, and not wishing to place obstacles in the way of the Secretary's own method, and though an officer, whom I thought might be a member of the Court, had expressed to me an adverse judgment on my reports (the only evidence to be received), I yielded a reluctant consent, and the Board was ordered, consisting, as you know, of two distinguished Bureau officers, my military seniors, and a third member, my junior, who had been intimately associated with both the senior members, as their Fleet Captain on the Upper Mississippi Fleet. From such a Board harmonious action might

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\* The following extract from a letter written by me the day *before* the Board was ordered, and immediately after my interview with the Secretary, will best show my understanding of the object of the Board.

WASHINGTON, December 9, 1862.

MY DEAR —. I had another interview with the Secretary yesterday. He proposed to place my three reports, exclusive of every thing else, *before* an Informal Board of officers, and thus open the case anew, and take it to the President. S. agreed with me in opinion that Admiral Farragut's letters should be laid before the Board, but the Secretary would not consent, as he said they, and the letters from the officers of the Oneida, were sympathizing evidence in my favor. His object is easily seen through. He will detail a Board of officers, of whom I think — and — will be members. They will see *some* reason in my own statements for the Secretary's hasty action, perhaps find some errors of judgment supporting him, and then recommend my restoration, and the trial I ask. The Secretary expressed great sympathy, promised speedy action, and talked as if I were already restored, saying, "he did not see any way in which the Department could restore me at once, without some preliminary like that proposed." I judge — will be one of the Board, because he said to me the day previous to my conversation with the Secretary, he could not agree with my friends, and that he judged me by my own letters, which were all he had read. Save me from such friends!

be expected, and the result is before you in the accompanying reports. The question of the propriety and justice of my dismissal from the Navy, with all its harsh attendants, never came before them. I have reason to believe that all of the members would have united in recommending my immediate restoration and trial,\* had that been the question.

The Board was called upon to report whether I performed my *whole* duty and did my *utmost* to stop the Oreto's entrance into Mobile Bay, — confining this examination to my three letters or reports, — exclusive of all other evidence, and ordered to hold no communication with any one on the subjects of the inquiry before submitting its written report.

The Board made two reports of the same date. In the first, they are of opinion I did not do my whole duty because I say, "If I had known her (the Oreto's) true character, I could have run her down." In their second report which they ask permission to make, they assign various reasons for their opinion that I failed to perform my whole duty, — which they divide into six sections. These I propose to examine. Carpenters, in examining a vessel for sale, or repair, or classification, frequently bore into her to ascertain defects, and it is an old saying, — they can bore to find the vessel rotten or sound. It does seem to me, my dear friend, that these gentlemen bored to find "rotten wood" in my reports. I cannot in my own experience find their opinions conclusive, though if indorsed by the Navy Department, they must become the rule of action for officers on blockade duty in future. I think the Secretary ought, without delay, to issue a "General Order" defining the duties, and instructing the commanding officers on blockade service. It certainly is not right to leave an officer without written or verbal instructions, with only the customs of the service for his guidance, and then punish him for his "*errors of judgment*."

\* The following extracts from a friendly letter, written after reading the reports of the Board confirm this impression.

DECEMBER 23, 1862.

MY DEAR —. As soon as I saw what had been referred, I felt there had been either a mistake or a misunderstanding. I knew it was the opinion of several naval officers, including *one who acted as referee*, that there is a peremptory rule that the blockade force *must* fire on any vessel, whatever her flag, which approaches, and that Captain Preble had broken that rule.

If the bare question were referred to them, I could have told Captain Preble that they would have decided that proposition that way, but at the same time those officers would earnestly have decided that for a failure to follow that rule in a case of doubt. Where there was no question of vigilance, courage, skill, or loyalty involved; where the question was as much of civil as military discretion; a meritorious officer ought not to be dismissed.

Their decision does not touch the great question. Suppose their decision on the mere rule of the blockade to have been technically right (of which I give no opinion), or *martially* right, still, what follows? If there was no want of vigilance, loyalty, courage, or skill, and the officer is one of great merit in the past, and in whom all confide, is he to be dismissed the service in disgrace? Certainly not. . . .

I can only say I think I understand the case, and that Captain Preble is made the victim, it is most becoming in me not to say to what. . . .

The Board say, *First*. "If the challenging or signal gun had been fired in the usual manner, according to common practice in such cases, the real character of the *Oreto* would have been so far made apparent, that Commander Preble would have been aware of the necessity of stopping her." I reply according to my judgment and experience, and that of *all* the officers present, I did fire the signal gun at the proper time and according to common practice, and that I was aware from the *first*, of the necessity of stopping her, whether friend or foe, and from my first getting underway, I fully intended doing so, and nothing but the want of steam, frustrated that intention. When I fired *into her*, I still supposed her, as did also my officers, an English man-of-war, and I thought her completely at my mercy, as she was not one hundred yards distant, and under my broadside. Supposing her to be entirely in my power — a sure prize — it was a "great mortification" to have her escape from me.

*Second*, says the Board, "owing to this neglect" (?) "advantages of time and position were lost and *thrown away*" (strong expression that last), 1st. by hailing, which is not customary or proper in such circumstances; \* 2d. by waiting to fire more than one shot across the *Oreto's* bows. I reply, I lost or threw away no advantage of time or position that could be avoided. That hailing is customary under such circumstances I *know*, and I followed the custom, whether proper or not, let others decide. It was the universal custom to hail all vessels approaching the blockade off Mobile, before and after, as well as during the short period I was the senior officer. We chased, overhauled, hailed, and then boarded one or more vessels every day. As in this instance "hailing" occupied no time, the officers of the *Oneida* not agreeing whether I hailed first, or fired first, and as it in nowise affected my actions, or the result, I cannot see how it conflicts with my having done my whole duty, or why blame should attach to what was only an extra, and, at all events, a *humane* precaution. To have fired sooner than I did, might have enabled the rebel vessel, if such she should prove, by her superior speed, to escape seaward to depredate upon our commerce, or lead me away in chase beyond the limits of the blockade, and thus enable the steamer *Cuba*, and other cotton loaded steamers known to be inside to run out and escape. It was an object to draw the steamer under my guns, as well as to prevent her forcing the blockade. I could have accomplished both objects but for lack of steam power, and the consequent loss of speed.

That I erred in firing more than one shot across the *Oreto's* bow, before firing into her, is the opinion of Admiral Farragut and of this Board. Naval opinion is however divided. There is no printed law on the subject, and the rule is not infallible or invariable. I have precedents for my action, and it was and is my opinion, an officer should exercise his own

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\* Since my chase of the *Oreto*, the Commander of the *Hatteras*, off Galveston, hailed the *Alabama*, and even lowered a boat to ascertain the character of the vessel before firing, — and the Commander of the *Mercedita*, in his account of the raid of the iron-clad rams off Charleston, says he hailed the ram when close under his quarter.

judgment according to circumstances.\* I have never seen or heard of a vessel being hove-to, whether by one or more shots, in three minutes. The time, and not the number of shots, should be considered. Had I reported firing but one shot ahead, and the next into the Oreto, no one would have questioned my judgment, or asked the *time* occupied between the two fires. Had I stated, without mention of the number of shots, that after firing ahead, I waited only three minutes to ascertain her character, and then fired into her, still supposing her an English man-of-war, I would have been applauded for my prompt action, or perhaps condemned for it, had she really proved an English government vessel.

*Third.* The Board does not arrive at the conclusion that the Oreto's *conduct* was such as to justify her being mistaken for a British man-of-war. Her honest and bold approach—in the words of my first letter—her “unparalleled audacity,” added to her appearance, did, in the opinion of the Oneida's officers, and of the lieutenant-commander of the Winona, justify her being mistaken for a British vessel of war, and such was my honest conviction. Her build, rig, flag, and pennant, gave her the unmistakable characteristics of a British vessel of war, and Captain Hewitt, of H. M. S. Rinaldo, a stranger to me, who saw her at Nassau, says in his volunteered letter, had he met her at sea, armed and wearing a pennant, he would have taken her for one of their ships. That she was a vessel of war was beyond a doubt, and as it was not known on our blockade, that the rebels had an armed vessel on the ocean, I could only treat her as a vessel of war of some friendly nation.

*Fourth.* The Board say, “having arrived at the conclusion that the Oreto was a British vessel of war, I had no just motive for not proceeding to resist with force an attempted violation of the blockade.” I reply, such was the intent of my whole action, and that I did resist with force such attempt on the part of the Oreto, while still considering her a British man-of-war, and I believe no one on board supposed her any thing else, until she hauled down her flag, two minutes *after* our first broadside.

*Fifth.* The Board explains the customs of blockade, which are certainly not a written law, and cannot be found in any treatise on blockade, or in any “Naval Law,” “General Order,” or “Instruction” I have seen. Being but customs, they may be, and often are, varied from to some extent, in the judgment of the blockading officer. They are not invariable. I could easily show where, during the present blockade of our coast, these rules of the Board have been frequently varied from.

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\* The newspapers have said I had Captain Wilkes and the Trent affair to warn me, and was by that experience induced to be *cautious*. I can safely say, I never thought of him, or that affair, or of any thing but to do my *whole* duty in the matter. The following extract from Captain Wilkes report of the Trent affair, shows that *two* shots were fired ahead of the Trent, to bring her to, and the San Jacinto's log-book shows, that 15 minutes elapsed between the two shots.

“The steamer approached and hoisted English colors, our ensign was hoisted, and a shot fired across her bow, she maintained her speed and showed no disposition to heave to. Then a shell was fired across her bow, which brought her to.”

*Sixth.* The Board sums up, I did not do my whole duty, inasmuch as I admit that had I known the Oreto's true character, I could have run her down, or, in other words, according to the Board, she was in my power. This is an evident misunderstanding of my report. As the vessels approached each other from opposite directions, I could have laid the Oneida directly across the Oreto's bow, and so have swung along side and boarded her, or run into her, and had there been a reasonable suspicion of her character, I would have done so. I did in this way approach her to within 100 yards, but am quite sure not one of the Board in my place would have taken the responsibility of boarding or sinking her, with so little cause for suspicion, or without a better knowledge of her character. I had no other opportunity for boarding. Had I known of an armed rebel vessel afloat on the ocean, or been informed, as I since have been, *accidentally*, not *officially*, of the rule adopted by British vessels of war in approaching a blockade, I certainly would have taken the responsibility of boarding her.

Contrary to the conclusions of the Board, I feel sure, and can so prove by eye-witnesses, that I did employ in season the ordinary means of ascertaining her true character, and that I did not lose time or position needlessly; did not "stop to hail," and, if wrong in firing more than one shot, in that only am culpable, and, perhaps, as Admiral Farragut says, deserve "some censure," but certainly it does not justify the harsh sentence pronounced so hastily against me.

In my opinion, the want of steam, and consequent loss of speed, was the sole cause of the Oreto's escape. Not aware of the condition of our steam, I felt secure of my prize, and did not realize she would escape us, we chased her so eagerly (at no time over 1,200 yards distant), until the shoal water obliged us to haul off, and, to my "great mortification," I saw her standing up channel, under cover of Fort Morgan, and beyond my capture. Does it not seem absurd I would not, to the best of my ability, do my "utmost" to capture an undefending and flying foe, whose capture would be alike honorable and remunerative.

The custom of our blockade at Mobile was, for the senior officer to remain at anchor in position, and signal to one of his squadron to chase, speak, and board each strange sail. Pursuing this custom, the Winona would have been all-sufficient to have sent out in chase, and she was already under way. In order to show the supposed British vessel of war that our blockade was a strict one, I was extra vigilant on this occasion. Got the Oneida under way when she was full ten miles distant, beat to quarters, and advanced from my position as a sentinel on post (to which I am compared by the Board), *five* miles to meet and challenge her. If I had remained at my anchorage or post, and allowed the Winona to have spoken her, I would have fulfilled the customs of the blockade, and have escaped all this trouble and censure.

It was undoubtedly an error of judgment my considering her a British vessel of war, but was it not a reasonable error. Now that all the facts are known, it is easy for critics a thousand miles away to say they would, in my place, have done differently, but place them in precisely the same situation,

without orders, ignorant of such a vessel's being afloat, and to act according to their own judgment, and I believe nine out of ten would act as I did.

The Secretary, in forwarding these reports to me, says that, in conformity with his understanding with me, it will be considered as terminating any further action by the Department. I have shown you that such was not my understanding, and I shall not cease, while life lasts, from my endeavors to procure a full investigation before a court-martial, an honorable restoration to my rank in the service, and to have the record of my disgrace expunged from the log-books. This unanticipated action of the Department on the report of the Board undoubtedly complicates matters, and is an obstacle in the way of my restoration, but that I shall ultimately obtain the justice I ask, I am as sure as that the sun shines. You are at liberty to show this letter to interested friends. Believe me,

Very truly yours,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

— — —, Esq., Portland, Maine.

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, }  
January 3, 1863. }

SIR,\* — Deferring to the opinion of the Board instructed by your order of the 10th ult., I acknowledge an *error of judgment* on my part in the matter of the escape of the Confederate Steamer Oreto.

I now respectfully request that I may be restored to the Navy, and that I may be tried by court-martial for that error, as soon as the service will admit of it.

I have the honor to be,

Respectfully your obedient servant,

GEO. HENRY PREBLE.

HON. GIDEON WELLES, Secretary of the Navy, Washington.

#### EXTRACTS FROM PRIVATE LETTERS.

WASHINGTON, February 14, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR, — . . . . Your name was sent to the Senate yesterday for your former position. There is no doubt of your confirmation, as your restoration was recommended by all the Naval Committee.

WASHINGTON, February 16, 1863.

DEAR SIR, — As soon as I received your letter, I spoke to the Chairman of the Naval Committee, who told me what you have known now for

\* This letter was addressed to the Secretary by the advice of several friends, as an essential preliminary to any action toward my restoration.

some days — that you had been nominated for your old rank. . . . You know, of course, that the Naval Committee unanimously recommended your restoration, and that the Secretary of the Navy accompanied the nomination with a handsome letter, speaking in high terms of your character and services in the Navy. Of course, to protect himself, he did not put the restoration on the ground that he had done a wrong in dismissing you. . . .

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WASHINGTON, February 20, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR, — . . . Your nomination has been some time before the Committee to take your rank, and will go through without a dissenting voice. . . .

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WASHINGTON, February 22, 1863.

DEAR SIR, — Your nomination was confirmed yesterday. . . .

Yours, in haste,

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NAVY DEPARTMENT, March 2, 1863.

SIR, — The President of the United States, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, having appointed you a Commander in the Navy from the 16th of July, 1862, I have the pleasure to inclose herewith your commission, dated 21st of February, 1863, — the receipt of which you will acknowledge to the Department.\*

I am respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

WM. FAXON, *Chief Clerk*.

Commander GEO. HENRY PREBLE, U. S. Navy, Cambridge, Mass.

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#### SKETCH OF THE ORETO.

[*From the N. Y. Herald.*]

The steamer Oreto sailed from Liverpool on the 22nd of March, 1862, and it was then rumored that she was intended for the service of the rebel government. She was built at Liverpool, ostensibly for the Italian government, and is consequently adapted for warlike purposes. She measures seven hundred and fifty tons, is capable of carrying several guns of the largest calibre on a draft of about twelve feet, and is represented as one of the finest and fastest vessels of her class afloat. She was regularly cleared at Liverpool for Palermo, in ballast, and had a crew of about fifty men on

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\* My promotion to the rank of Commander having been made during the recess of Congress, had not been confirmed by the Senate at the date of my dismissal.—G. H. P.

board. Very contradictory statements were current as to the real destination of the vessel and her armament at the time she was preparing for sea. According to some reports the vessel had arms and ammunition on board when she left the Mersey; but this was positively denied, and the denial was accompanied by the assertion that she had not an ounce of powder or single gun on board, and that her *bonâ fide* destination was Palermo. Other reports were that she would undoubtedly go to Palermo, and from thence proceed to Bermuda, where she was to take on board the armament and ammunition specially sent there for her. She would then, said rumor, take to sea, either as a privateer or as a war vessel, commissioned by the rebels. She sailed under sealed orders. In due course this vessel arrived at her unknown destination, which turned out to be Nassau. On arriving, she was immediately seized by the captain of Her Majesty's steamer Greyhound, but almost as quickly released. Shortly after she was seized again, but, after some difficulty, released again. The authorities pretended to have great doubts as to whether she was or was not intended for the service of the rebels. On one occasion, when the British gunboat Bulldog went to seize her, she was discharging shell — doubtless a part of the cargo she had brought for the rebels.

The Nassau correspondent of the New York Herald, on the 2nd of September, gave the following concerning her:

"Though everybody knew, by hearsay, etc., what the famed steamship Oreto, which lay in our port some time ago, was intended for, there was not, so the judge of the Admiralty Court decided, any legal evidence to condemn her. In judicial cases it is hard to divest a judge's mind of his prejudices, but I believe, although his honor may have erred in judgment, he did what he conceived to be conscientiously right. Having escaped from the clutches of the law, the Oreto went outside Hog Island, and, being afraid of the United States gunboat R. R. Cuyler, then lying in the offing, Her Majesty's ship Petrel went out, and the Oreto lay close by her.

"One fine Saturday night in the month of August, a few weeks ago, at an hour when sailors were likely to be enchained by Bacchus, a mob of discharged sailors and others were employed to transship cargo from a schooner into the Oreto. I am credibly informed that at about half an hour after they got on board the Oreto, she put to sea, and, in about three hours afterwards, overtook the British schooner Prince Alfred, said to have been recently purchased for and on account of Mr. John B. Lafitte.

"'What schooner is that?' said Captain Maffit, of the Oreto.

"'The Prince Alfred,' was the answer.

"'Don't you want a tow?' cries Maffit.

"'Yes,' is the ready response.

"'Then take down your sails,' comes from the Oreto; and accordingly a hawser is passed, and the Oreto towed the Prince Alfred to Green Cay, a small island forming one of the Bahama group. The next day, the Sabbath, but for which the Oreto had no regard, the men began to take out of the Prince Alfred her cargo, and to put it on board the Oreto. They discharged six thirty-two pound broadside guns, and two sixty-eight pound

pivot guns, lots of stores, shot, shell, and powder. This took six days to do when the Oreto, having these guns mounted on her deck, weighed anchor, hoisted the Confederate flag, her crew manning the rigging, and giving three cheers.

"She afterwards went to Cardenas, Cuba."

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[From the *New York Herald*.]

HAVANA, Sept. 6, 1862.

The famous Oreto, now called the Florida, a wooden screw steamer built for the rebels, left Nassau on the 6th of August for Green Key where her guns were got out and mounted. She then came to Cardenas, where she arrived on the night of the 10th ult. Though ordered away by the government, she was allowed to remain till the 31st, though a Spanish man-of-war was put on each side of her, and no one from shore was allowed to visit her save the doctor.

She lost many men by fever and desertion. Nine were buried on the 31st — eight seamen and one officer, son of the commander, John N. Maffit, ex-lieutenant in the United States Navy.

The Oreto mounts three guns on a side, said to be 68 pounders; and two swivel guns, one forward and one aft, reported to be 100 pounders.

She is to be plated, and carries the iron plates in her hold. She is low in the water, and steams slowly; leaking and short handed. Several men engaged here were sent to Cardenas to join her, but were arrested and imprisoned by the authorities.

On the night of the 31st, at half-past nine, she started for Havana, arriving on the morning of the 1st instant, reporting thirty-six hands all told, most of them sick.

Maffit has been ill for a fortnight; some say with putrid fever; some say with yellow fever. The first officer, Stribling, was formerly first officer of the Sumpter. The only man allowed to join her was an Irishman, named Bradley, I believe a pseudo M. D., who has lately been discharged from two different hospitals as a *non compos mentis*.

The Florida was ordered off to sea, and went on the evening of the 1st, in the midst of a severe thunder and rain storm.

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#### The Rebel War Steamer Oreto at Mobile.

[From the *Richmond Dispatch*, Sept. 18.]

The Augusta and Atlanta papers publish a despatch from Mobile announcing the arrival of "an iron-clad man-of-war" at that port. The statement is incorrect. A special correspondent at Mobile furnishes the *Charleston Mercury* with some authentic information in regard to the arrival referred to:—

The vessel is the steam corvette Oreto, now called the Florida, and is not

an iron-clad. Our readers are aware of the difficulties which the commander of this ship encountered at Nassau, owing to the rigor of the British neutrality regulations. Having finally escaped from the clutches of the Court of Admiralty, Capt. Maffit steamed away to the Gulf and boldly ran the gauntlet of the blockaders at the mouth of Mobile Bay, in broad daylight, on the 4th inst. The captain was at the time sick with fever, as were most of her small crew of thirteen men. The Florida ran within sixty yards of the Yankee vessels, and her sides are peppered all over with shrapnel and grape-shot. One 11-inch shell went through her side a foot above the water line, and lodged in the "coal bunkers." The Florida is a beautiful and well-armed corvette of great speed. Her armament consists of eight guns. Her dash through the blockaders, with a sick crew of only thirteen men, in broad daylight, is one of the most daring naval exploits of the war. The Florida did not fire a shot, as her crew were unable to man even a single gun. She had one killed and two wounded.\* She now lies below the city in quarantine.

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[From the *Boston Journal*.]

Capt. Brown, of the brig Estella, burnt by the pirate Florida, says Capt. Maffit told him that when he run into Mobile with the Oreto (now Florida), the fire of the gunboats under Commander Preble seriously damaged his vessel. One shot penetrated her port side amidships, making a hole large enough to roll a bale of cotton through; another ball struck the after part of the vessel, entering the cabin and damaging it severely. The rigging, spars, and smokestack were also materially damaged. One man had his head taken off by a ball, and another his leg.

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[From the *N. Y. Herald*.]

KEY WEST, Jan. 20, 1863.

The United States steam sloop-of-war Oneida, Captain Hazzard, has arrived from Mobile bar with despatches for Admiral Farragut. She brings news of the escape from Mobile Bay, on Friday morning last, of the privateer Oreto. This affair will create food enough for discussion among those who were a thousand miles away, and know nothing of the difficulties to be encountered by a blockading fleet, no matter how large it may be. Captain Hazzard says that his ship, under the most favorable circumstances, can only go *ten and a half knots*; that she *labors and rolls fearfully* with the least sea, so that it is impossible to cast loose his heavy guns, or, if he were to cast them loose, to work them with any degree of accuracy. Such is one of our crack ships, that are expected to gobble up a dozen 290's should they make their appearance.

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\* A Mobile newspaper states *four* were killed and *several* wounded.

# PETITIONS.

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TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE undersigned, citizens of Cambridge, have noticed with surprise and profound regret, the summary dismissal from the navy of their fellow citizen, Commander George Henry Preble, a dismissal accompanied by circumstances of peculiar official degradation.

From the long service of this officer, and from what we are led to believe of the professional fidelity and efficiency which has marked that service, as well as from Commander Preble's unquestionable loyalty and spotless private reputation, we cannot but feel, that the admitted error in judgment upon which his rigorous punishment is avowedly based, is out of proportion to that punishment.

We respectfully urge that something is due to Commander Preble's twenty-seven years of devoted public service, and something to the self-respect and security of other noble men in our navy, whose zeal may rather be chilled than quickened by the example of so terrible a penalty, for a simple error in judgment, to which the wisest, bravest, and most vigilant of them may at any moment be liable.

We therefore most respectfully pray, that the ignominious sentence in question may be revoked, and that this officer, who has heretofore, as we believe, brought no public or private dishonor upon a name and blood of high distinction in our naval annals, may at least have accorded to him the ordinary justice of a trial by court-martial for the fault charged upon him.

A. P. PEABODY,  
B. PIERCE,  
C. FOLSOM,  
E. WASHBURN,  
H. W. PAINE,  
J. M. S. WILLIAMS,  
J. C. DODGE,  
C. F. RUSSELL,

J. D. GREEN,  
JAMES GREENLEAF,  
STEPHEN HIGGINSON,  
CHARLES CUSHMAN,  
W. NEWELL,  
R. H. DANA, JR.  
H. W. LONGFELLOW.

CAMBRIDGE, September 24, 1862.

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NOTE. — The petitions from Cambridge and Portland were circulated and signed on the first news of Commander Preble's dismissal, before all the facts were known, and eighteen days before he received the news himself.

## TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE undersigned, citizens of Maine, have read with deep sorrow the order of the President, dismissing Commander George H. Preble from the naval service of the country.

Mr. Preble was born among us; many of us have known him intimately from his youth. He is descended from ancestors coeval with the settlement of the country, and renowned in its civil and military history. His grandfather was a general officer in active duty before the Revolution; the world-renowned Commodore Preble was his uncle. Captain Preble's life has been worthy of this descent, and of these traditions; his own record is untarnished. For twenty-seven years, he has honorably and faithfully served his country in the navy, without fear and reproach, and has rendered to it most active and important service.

We believe his last act for which he has received the severe censure of the navy department, was simply an error of judgment, and not a want of discipline or courage; he was deceived by a trick of a most subtle enemy. For one mistake amidst a thousand useful and brilliant deeds, let not an honorable name be perpetually disgraced. To err is human, to forgive divine. The punishment already inflicted is sufficient as an example and a warning.

We therefore earnestly appeal to you, sir, to remove this burden of official disgrace from a meritorious officer, whose life has been devoted to the service of the country, and whose soul is wholly loyal to the constitution and the union. Give him an opportunity once more to exercise his high naval skill and ability, and we feel sure that neither the government nor the people will have occasion to regret the restoration of a beloved officer, who is too valuable to be lost, in this great crisis, to the public service. Let the name of *Preble* be once more borne upon that honored roll, to which through the history of the republic it has given lustre.

W. P. Fessenden,  
William Willis,  
Nathan Clifford,  
Ether Shepley,  
Charles S. Daveis,  
Edward Fox,  
Joseph C. Noyes,  
Jedediah Jewett,  
S. E. Spring,  
W. W. Thomas,  
Thomas Amory Deblois,  
Edward Payson,  
J. Williams,  
E. P. Gerrish,

H. Ilsley,  
J. M. Churchill,  
Charles R. Frost,  
T. C. Hersey,  
Charles Perry,  
Byron Greenough,  
Warren Sparrow,  
Oliver Gerrish,  
William P. Preble,  
Gilman Daveis,  
A. R. Mitchell,  
James R. Dockray,  
J. B. Carroll,  
James H. Baker,

J. B. Brown,  
Martin Gore,  
E. E. Upham,  
N. Deering,  
James B. Cahoon,  
Henry Fox,  
M. Coolidge,  
Charles Rogers,  
J. B. Fillebrown,  
Eliphalet Webster,  
D. W. True,  
Isaac Emery,  
Andrew J. Chase,  
William H. Foye,

E. A. Norton,	S. Cammett,	D. W. Clark,
Thomas R. Lyman,	M. P. Emery,	Albert Stephenson,
N. P. Cram,	Jonas H. Perley,	Joseph W. Dyer,
R. M. Richardson,	A. S. King,	Abel Sawyer,
A. K. Shurtleff,	A. Butler,	W. C. Bradley,
J. B. Scott,	Franklin Fox,	Lewis Pierce,
Allen Haines,	H. W. Robinson,	Charles Payson,
Henry Morrill,	Thomas E. Twitchell,	H. M. Payson,
M. M. Butler,	Cyrus Greene,	George Evans,
Rensselaer Cram,	Robert Bradley,	Charles E. Sawyer,
Abner Lowell,	Nathaniel J. Miller,	Joshua Dunn,
William Senter,	W. H. Shaw,	Daniel Fox,
Eben Steele,	N. J. Miller, Jr.,	William E. Morris,
Thomas R. Hayes,	John W. Perkins,	Henry P. Lord,
John Rand,	Thomas H. Usher,	John F. Hull,
John F. Anderson,	Edward H. Burgin,	Augustus F. Gerrish,
H. J. Libby,	W. H. Waldron,	S. B. Haskell,
John W. Dana,	Charles Oxnard,	James Furbish,
George R. Davis,	W. S. Dana,	Hall S. Davis,
Edward H. Daveis,	Samuel P. Baker,	George Warren,
William H. Wood,	Luther Dana,	H. N. Jose,
John P. Boyd,	William Boyd,	William L. Alden,
William W. Woodbury,	Phineas Barnes,	Moses Gould,
C. A. Stackpole,	Samuel P. Shaw,	Edward Gould,
William D. Little,	Horatio Stebbins,	Arthur McLellan,
John M. Adams,	Oscar F. Dana,	Nath'l. F. Deering,
James T. McCobb,	Edward Oxnard,	L. G. S. Boyd,
Benj. Kingsbury, Jr.,	H. C. Moody,	

And three hundred others.

PORTLAND, Sept. 23, 1862.

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#### COMMUNICATION OF A BOSTON MERCHANT (R. B. F.).

TO THE EDITOR OF THE BOSTON JOURNAL:

The case of Commander Preble, who has been summarily dismissed from the Navy, has created considerable sensation in this community.

As I was one of those, who, believing that the Government had committed an error which would be remedied whenever all the facts came to light at first discouraged any interference with the action of the Executive, I now feel it incumbent on me to say that after learning all the facts, by perusal of the correspondence and from Commander Preble himself, I am satisfied that it is a case not merely sanctioning, but *demanding* the expression of public opinion; it is a case in which every man who feels an interest in the honor of our Navy should freely express himself; it is a case in which every naval officer has a vital interest.

The disgrace of dismissal without trial, without hearing, without a full knowledge of the facts, cannot be wiped out by any mere act of clemency on the part of the Government. Commander Preble is therefore right in asking for an investigation.

I do not fully understand the legal status of the case, but I presume that as Commander Preble's name has been stricken from the Navy list, he cannot be tried until he shall be restored; he is no longer Commander Preble. He may be restored for the purpose of trial, or his order of dismissal may be revoked by the President as publicly as it was promulgated. But it would be almost too much to ask that this act of simple justice should be so worded as to satisfy the sensitive mind of an officer who feels that he is not only sustaining his own rights, but is doing that which he deems to be his duty to every brother officer. Commander Preble does not stop to consider what may be *merely expedient* in order to get back into the Navy.

He does not ask that his sin (be it more or less) shall be forgiven, and that he shall be restored and thank the Government for its clemency; he insists upon it that he has not sinned at all; that he should be put back just where he stood before, or be condemned by his peers after a full investigation. He is not only willing but anxious to abide by the verdict of a court; he prefers that to any executive clemency, because to accept this, he thinks, would be to admit that he was wrong, and that the severe rebuke was necessary in order to wake up the Navy to a sense of duty.

However necessary such an example may have been elsewhere, I am fully convinced that in the case of Commander Preble it was a mistake arising from a want of information, and that if the case had been fully reported by Admiral Farragut to the Navy Department, no censure would have passed on Commander Preble.

Now that the character of the Oreto is known, it is asked why he did not fire into her instantly when she did not stop, after the first warning shot. The answer is that he and every man on board the Oneida took her for a British vessel of war, and that it is not customary, nor in accordance with the rules of the Navy to fire into a vessel even of doubtful character until after repeated warnings. Only three minutes elapsed between the first warning shot and the fourth, which was aimed at her but passed over. The verdict of a court of inquiry or court-martial will best say how far Commander Preble did his duty, and I hope he will have the opportunity of vindicating himself.

Truly yours,  
NAUTICUS.

NOVEMBER 18, 1862.

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TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

The undersigned, citizens of the United States resident in Massachusetts, respectfully represent:

That, while jealous of the honor of the flag, and mindful of the occasional necessity in time of war of the dismissal by summary process of an officer guilty of crime or gross neglect, they are nevertheless constrained by their sense of duty to an officer whom they have always held in high esteem, and who has served his country without reproach for the long period of twenty-seven years, and also of duty to the Naval service, to ask that the case of Commander Preble may be reconsidered; and that he may have allowed to him that which, under the circumstances, your memorialists cannot but consider as the simplest justice, — a trial for his alleged misconduct before a court of inquiry or court-martial.\*

R. B. Forbes,	Nathan Crowell,	Henry G. Crowell,
Geo. B. Upton,	Caleb Curtis,	James P. Bush,
John D. Bates,	R. S. S. Andros,	Jas. P. Gardner,
William F. Weld,	Geo. R. Minot,	Aaron D. Weld,
James Lodge,	P. C. Brooks,	J. W. Baleh,
Francis Bacon,	Henderson Inches,	John D. Bates, Jr.,
Thos. A. Goddard,	Thos. C. Smith,	Wm. O. Comstock,
J. Ingersoll Bowditch,	R. Hooper,	William Perkins,
Henry A. Pierce,	J. Thos. Stevenson,	C. G. Loring,
Osborn Howes,	Jon. G. Torrey,	Francis Lowell,
R. B. Storer,	J. Jeff. Coolidge,	Israel Whitney,
T. Quincy Brown,	Amos Lyman,	S. C. Thwing,
Jacob C. Rogers,	Thomas Motley,	Edgar Tucker,
Richard D. Rogers,	Francis Peabody Jr.,	D. N. Spooner,
Frederic I. Bush,	Henry Saltonstall,	Augustine Heard, Jr.
		And many more.

Boston, November, 19, 1862.

\* Other petitions like this were signed by prominent citizens of Boston, Salem, Newburyport, New Bedford, Charlestown, &c.











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